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*An Anthology of  
Mother Verse*



AN ANTHOLOGY  
OF MOTHER VERSE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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# To My Mother



God gives us friends—and that means much;  
But far above all others,  
The greatest of his gifts to earth  
Was when He thought of Mothers







## HYMN FOR THE MOTHER

*My child is lying on my knees;  
The signs of heaven she reads;  
My face is all the heaven she sees,  
Is all the heaven she needs.*

*And she is well, yea, bathed in bliss,  
If heaven is in my face, —  
Behind it is all tenderness  
And truthfulness and grace.*

*I mean her well so earnestly,  
Unchanged in changing mood;  
My life would go without a sigh  
To bring her something good.*

*I also am a child, and I  
Am ignorant and weak;  
I gaze upon the starry sky,  
And then I must not speak;*

*For all behind the starry sky,  
Behind the world so broad,  
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie  
The Infinite of God.*

*Ay, true to her, though troubled sore,  
I cannot choose but be:  
Thou who art peace forevermore  
Art very true to me.*

## *Hymn for the Mother*

*If I am low and sinful, bring  
More love where need is rife;  
Thou knowest what an awful thing  
It is to be a life.*

*Hast thou not wisdom to enwrap  
My waywardness about,  
In doubting safety on the lap  
Of Love that knows no doubt ?*

*Lo ! Lord, I sit in thy wide space,  
My child upon my knee;  
She looketh up into my face,  
And I look up to thee.*

GEORGE MACDONALD

## FOREWORD

SCATTERED throughout the works of the great poets, there are many beautiful tributes to mothers and subtle interpretations of motherhood ; also, in old as well as in very new poems, there are illuminating suggestions to mothers regarding both their opportunities and their responsibilities. This valuable body of "mother literature" has but one drawback — the fact that it is so diffused. The aim of this book has been to gather together in one volume the very best poems from these various sources, for the use and also for the enjoyment of present-day mothers, both young and old.

E. McC.

CAMBRIDGE, *April*, 1917.





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## INTRODUCTION

THERE was once a Child who lived very much by himself in a tall building with many windows looking skyward.

He did not lack for care, for he had food and drink, shelter and raiment, yet he was always hungry and thirsty and cold, and the young soul of him pined and knew not why.

The days were very dreary and very long, though in a child's life they should flit by like painted butterflies on the wing.

There was a courtyard far, far below, so that out-of-doors was not withheld from the Child, but when he reached the place from which the green wood could be seen, the blue sky was so far away that he felt desolate, and longed for a smaller world of which he could be a part.

And so it was, day after day, till twilight came and hid the bigness of things; and when the cool dark floated into his bedroom



## *Introduction*

and the friendly moon came to keep him company, he was happy, for then he drifted off into the land of dreams.

The dream led him first into a garden ; open to the sun and offering to every sense a rare and subtle charm that could be felt, but not defined.

There was a Balm-of-Gilead tree in one corner, and in another a group of young pines, — slender, strong, vigorous trees under which one could hide in the noonday heat. And there were tufts of sweet herbs sending out health-giving odors ; and there were perfumed tangles of mignonette and heliotrope and lavender and purple clover, with honeysuckle climbing here and there to make the air fragrant.

The flowers were all dear, familiar, modest ones, such as violets and pansies, clove-pinks and hyacinths ; but, loveliest of all, was a clump of Madonna lilies, their tall green stalks crowned with dazzling white blossoms. The Child crept under them and, looking up, marveled at the shining purity of the blooms that made a little white heaven over his head.

There were birds in the trees, and the Child sometimes fancied that they tried to speak to him, although he could never puzzle out the meaning of their language. But one night when the birds slept he heard the

## *Introduction*

rustle of great wings, a stirring of the air, a soft flutter, and then, in the darkness, a Voice. There was no Presence, but the Voice was clear, and it said:—

“Do you find the garden beautiful, my child?”

“The most beautiful thing in the world,” answered the Child. “Is it you who are making it?”

“Yes,” said the Voice, “I am making the garden, with your help.”

“But I have done nothing,” said the Child.

“You have loved it,” said the Voice, “and Love makes things grow.”

“And shall I ever plant anything in the garden myself?” asked the Child.

“Yes; for the garden is now finished save for that which you will plant with your own hands.”

And then the Child awoke with the perfume of lilies in his nostrils, and it was the beginning of another long day.

But night came with a difference. The Child had barely slipped into the dream when he felt that he was being swiftly wafted to the garden. And the wings that bore him and guided him were so soft and so strong that he did not wonder when he heard the Voice.

## Introduction

And the Voice said: —

“If you were to plant something precious in the garden, my child, what spot would you choose?”

“I would choose the spot under the Madonna lilies,” said the Child, “for the blossoms make a little white heaven overhead and near by is a crystal spring whose pebbles are changed into gold and precious stones by the moonbeams.”

Like puffs of thistledown they swept over the young pines and floated past the little groves of mignonette and lavender and purple clover, till they alighted near the crystal spring where the Madonna lilies bloomed.

“Stretch out your hand, my child,” said the Voice, “and what you find in the wet grass, that is for you to plant.”

And the Child stretched out his hand and touched something soft and warm hidden in a blanket of leaves.

“Is it a bird?” he whispered, for he felt a throb under his hand.

“*No, it is not a bird!*” said the Voice, — “*it is a heart!* Make a hollow for it like a nest; do not unwrap it, but lay it gently in the hollow; cover it lightly with soft earth, then step back, for the place on which you stand will be holy ground.”

## Introduction

And the Child did as he was bidden.

He made a hollow like a nest; he laid the heart gently in the hollow without removing its blanket of leaves; then he covered it lightly with earth and stepped back and waited in silence.

And straightway (for there is no time in dreams) the heart stirred, and trembled, and swelled, and broke through the soft earth, and lifted itself and grew. And it seemed to summon to its aid all the richest treasures of the garden; the strength of the young pines, the aroma of the sweet herbs, the fragrance of the flowers, the healing balsam that flowed from the Balm-of-Gilead tree, and the purity of the lilies.

And when it came to its moment of full perfection, *lo! it was, not a growing and blossoming heart, but — a Mother!*

*And the Child knew!* For knowledge comes swiftly and surely in dreams!

He stretched out his arms, and in the deep peace that followed mutual recognition and need, the Wingèd Presence vanished softly into the darkness, leaving the Mother and Child together in the Garden of Dreams.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN



# *The* YOUNG MOTHER







## SEVEN TIMES FOUR

HEIGH HO ! daisies and buttercups,  
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall,  
When the wind wakes how they rock in the  
grasses,  
And dance with the cuckoo-buds, slender  
and small :  
Here's two bonny boys, and here's mother's  
own lasses,  
Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,  
Mother shall thread them a daisy chain ;  
Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-spar-  
row,  
That loved her brown little ones, loved  
them full fain ;  
Sing, " Heart thou art wide though the house  
be but narrow " —  
Sing once, and sing it again.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,  
Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and  
they bow ;  
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,  
And haply one musing doth stand at her  
prow.

## *To Mother*

O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little  
daughters,  
Maybe he thinks on you now!

Heigh ho! daisies and buttercups,  
Fair yellow daffodils stately and tall;  
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,  
And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow  
and thrall,  
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing  
its measure —  
God that is over us all.

*Jean Ingelow*

## A MOTHER'S PICTURE

SHE seemed an angel to our infant eyes!  
Once, when the glorifying moon revealed  
Her who at evening by our pillow kneeled —  
Soft-voiced and golden-haired, from holy  
skies  
Flown to her loves on wings of Paradise —  
We looked to see the pinions half-concealed.  
The Tuscan vines and olives will not yield  
Her back to me, who loved her in this  
wise,  
And since have little known her, but have  
grown  
To see another mother, tenderly,  
Watch over sleeping darlings of her own;

## *The Young Mother*

Perchance the years have changed her : yet  
alone

This picture lingers : still she seems to me  
The fair, young Angel of my infancy.

*Edmund Clarence Stedman*

### MOTHER'S LOVE

HE sang so wildly, did the Boy,  
That you could never tell  
If 't was a madman's voice you heard,  
Or if the spirit of a bird  
Within his heart did dwell :  
A bird that dallies with his voice  
Among the matted branches ;  
Or on the free blue air his note  
To pierce, and fall, and rise, and float,  
With bolder utterance launches,  
None ever was so sweet as he,  
The boy that wildly sang to me ;  
Though toilsome was the way and long,  
He led me not to lose the song.

But when again we stood below  
The unhidden sky, his feet  
Grew slacker, and his note more slow,  
But more than doubly sweet.  
He led me then a little way  
Athwart the barren moor,  
And then he stayed and bade me stay

## *To Mother*

Beside a cottage door ;  
I could have stayed of mine own will,  
In truth, my eye and heart to fill  
With the sweet sight which I saw there,  
At the dwelling of the cottager.

A little in the doorway sitting,  
The mother plied her busy knitting,  
And her cheek so softly smiled,  
You might be sure, although her gaze  
Was on the meshes of the lace,  
Yet her thoughts were with her child.  
But when the boy had heard her voice,  
As o'er her work she did rejoice,  
His became silent altogether,  
And slyly creeping by the wall  
He seiz'd a single plume, let fall  
By some wild bird of longest feather ;  
And all a-tremble with his freak,  
He touch'd her lightly on the cheek.

Oh, what a loveliness her eyes  
Gather in that one moment's space,  
While peeping round the post she spies  
Her darling's laughing face !  
Oh, mother's love is glorifying,  
On the cheek like sunset lying ;  
In the eyes a moisten'd light,  
Softer than the moon at night !

*Thomas Burbidge*

## *The Young Mother*

### THE WIDOW'S MITE

A WIDOW, — she had only one !  
A puny and decrepit son ;  
But, day and night,  
Though fretful oft, and weak and small,  
A loving child, he was her all, —  
The Widow's Mite.

The Widow's Mite — aye, so sustain'd,  
She battled onward, nor complain'd  
Though friends were fewer :  
And while she toil'd for daily fare,  
A little crutch upon the stair  
Was music to her.

I saw her then, and now I see  
That, though resign'd and cheerful, she  
Has sorrow'd much :  
She has, — He gave it tenderly, —  
Much faith, and, carefully laid by,  
A little crutch.

*Frederick Locker-Lampson*

### THE DAGUERREOTYPE

THIS, then, is she,  
My mother as she looked at seventeen,  
When she first met my father. Young in-  
credibly,



## *To Mother*

Younger than spring, without the faintest  
trace

Of disappointment, weariness, or tear  
Upon the childlike earnestness and grace  
Of the waiting face.

Those close-wound ropes of pearl  
(Or common beads made precious by their  
use)

Seem heavy for so slight a throat to wear ;  
But the low bodice leaves the shoulders bare  
And half the glad swell of the breast, for news  
That now the woman stirs within the girl.

And yet,

Even so, the loops and globes  
Of beaten gold

And jet

Hung, in the stately way of old,

From the ears' drooping lobes

On festivals and Lord's-day of the week,

Show all too matron-sober for the cheek, —

Which, now I look again, is perfect child,

Or no — or no — 't is girlhood's very self,

Moulded by some deep, mischief-ridden elf

So meek, so maiden mild,

But startling the close gazer with the sense

Of passion forest-shy and forest-wild,

And delicate delirious merriments.

As a moth beats sidewise

And up and over, and tries

## *The Young Mother*

To skirt the irresistible lure  
Of the flame that has him sure,  
My spirit, that is none too strong to-day,  
Flutters and makes delay, —  
Pausing to wonder at the perfect lips,  
Lifting to muse upon the low-drawn hair  
And each hid radiance there,  
But powerless to stem the tide-race bright,  
The vehement peace which drifts it toward  
the light

Where soon — ah, now, with cries  
Of grief and giving-up unto its gain  
It shrinks no longer nor denies,  
But dips  
Hurriedly home to the exquisite heart of  
pain, —

And all is well, for I have seen them plain,  
The unforgettable, the unforgotten eyes!  
Across the blinding gush of these good tears  
They shine as in the sweet and heavy years  
When by her bed and chair  
We children gathered jealously to share  
The sunlit aura breathing myrrh and thyme,  
Where the sore-stricken body made a clime  
Gentler than May and pleasanter than rhyme,  
Holier and more mystical than prayer.  
God, how thy ways are strange!  
That this should be, even this,  
The patient head  
Which suffered years ago the dreary change!

## *To Mother*

That these so dewy lips should be the same  
As those I stooped to kiss  
And heard my harrowing half-spoken name,  
A little ere the one who bowed above her,  
Our father and her very constant lover,  
Rose stoical, and we knew that she was dead.  
Then I, who could not understand or share  
His antique nobleness,  
Being unapt to bear  
The insults which time flings us for our  
    proof,  
Fled from the horrible roof  
Into the alien sunshine merciless,  
The shrill satiric fields ghastly with day  
Raging to front God in his pride of sway  
And hurl across the lifted swords of fate  
That ringed Him where He sat  
My puny gage of scorn and desolate hate  
Which somehow should undo Him, after  
    all!  
That this girl face, expectant, virginal,  
Which gazes out at me  
Boon as a sweetheart, as if nothing loth  
(Save for the eyes, with other presage  
    stored)  
To pledge me troth,  
And in the kingdom where the heart is lord  
Take sail on the terrible gladness of the  
    deep  
Whose winds the gray Norns keep,—

## *The Young Mother*

That this should be indeed  
The flesh which caught my soul, a flying  
    seed,  
Out of the to and fro  
Of scattering hands where the seedsman  
    Mage,  
Stooping from star to star and age to age  
Sings as he sows!  
That underneath this breast  
Nine moons I fed  
Deep of divine unrest,  
While over and over in the dark she said,  
“Blessed! but not as happier children  
    blessed” —

That this should be  
Even she . . .  
God, how with time and change  
Thou makest thy footsteps strange!  
Ah, now I know  
They play upon me, and it is not so  
Why, 't is a girl I never saw before,  
A little thing to flatter and make weep,  
To tease until her heart is sore,  
Then kiss and clear the score;  
A gypsy run-the-fields,  
A little liberal daughter of the earth,  
Good for what hour of truancy and mirth  
The careless season yields  
Hither-side the flood of the year and yonder  
    of the neap;

## *To Mother*

Then thank you, thanks again, and twenty  
light good-byes, —  
O shrined above the skies,  
Frown not, clear brow,  
Darken not, holy eyes!  
Thou knowest well I know that it is thou  
Only to save from such memories  
As would unman me quite,  
Here in this web of strangeness caught  
And prey to troubled thought  
Do I devise  
These foolish shifts and slight ;  
Only to shield me from the afflicting sense  
Of some waste influence  
Which from this morning face and lustrous  
hair  
Breathes on me sudden ruin and despair.  
In any other guise,  
With any but this girlish depth of gaze,  
Your coming had not so unsealed and  
poured  
The dusty amphoras where I had stored  
The drippings of the winepress of my days.  
I think these eyes foresee,  
Now in their unawakened virgin time,  
Their mother's pride in me,  
And dream even now, unconsciously,  
Upon each soaring peak and sky-hung lea  
You pictured I should climb.  
Broken premonitions come,

## *The Young Mother*

Shapes, gestures visionary,  
Not as once to maiden Mary  
The manifest angel with fresh lilies came  
Intelligibly calling her by name ;  
But vanishingly, dumb,  
Thwarted and bright and wild,  
As heralding a sin-defiled,  
Earth-encumbered, blood-begotten, passion-  
ate man-child,  
Who yet should be a trump of mighty call  
Blown in the gates of evil kings  
To make them fall ;  
Who yet should be a sword of flame before  
The soul's inviolate door  
To beat away the clang of hellish wings ;  
Who yet should be a lyre  
Of high unquenchable desire  
In the day of little things, —  
Look where the amphoras,  
The yield of many days,  
Trod by my hot soul from the pulp of  
self,  
And set upon the shelf  
In sullen pride  
The Vineyard-master's tasting to abide —  
O mother mine !  
Are these the bringings-in, the doings fine  
Of him who used to praise ?  
Emptied and overthrown  
The jars lie strown.



## *To Mother*

These, for their flavor duly nursed,  
Drip from the stopples vinegar accursed;  
These, I thought honied to the very seal,  
Dry, dry, — a little acid meal,  
A pinch of mouldy dust,  
Sole leavings of the amber-mantling must;  
These rude to look upon,  
But flasking up the liquor dearest won,  
Through sacred hours and hard,  
With watchings and with wrestlings and  
    with grief,  
Even of these, of these in chief,  
The stale breath sickens reeking from the  
    shard.  
Nothing is left. Aye, how much less than  
    naught!  
What shall be said or thought  
Of the slack hours and waste imaginings,  
The cynic rending of the wings,  
Known to the froward, that unreckoning  
    heart  
Whereof this brewage was the precious part,  
Treasured and set away with furtive boast?  
O dear and cruel ghost,  
Be merciful, be just!  
See, I was yours and I am in the dust.  
Then look not so, as if all things were well!  
Take your eyes from me, leave me to my  
    shame,  
Or else, if gaze they must,

## *The Young Mother*

Steel them with judgment, darken them with  
blame ;

But by the ways of light ineffable  
You bade me go and I have faltered from,  
By the low waters moaning out of hell  
Whereto my feet have come,  
Lay not on me these intolerable  
Looks of rejoicing love, of pride, of happy  
trust !

Nothing dismayed ?

By all I say and all I hint not made  
Afraid ?

O then, stay by me ! Let  
These eyes afflict me, cleanse me, keep me  
yet,

Brave eyes and true !

See how the shriveled heart, that long has  
lain

Dead to delight and pain,

Stirs, and begins again

To utter pleasant life, as if it knew

The wintry days were through ;

As if in its awakening boughs it heard

The quick, sweet-spoken bird.

Strong eyes and brave,

Inexorable to save !

*William Vaughn Moody*

## *To Mother*

### BABY'S SKIES

WOULD you know the baby's skies?  
Baby's skies are mother's eyes.  
Mother's eyes and smile together  
Make the baby's pleasant weather.

Mother, keep your eyes from tears,  
Keep your heart from foolish fears.  
Keep your lips from dull complaining  
Lest the baby think 't is raining.

*M. C. Bartlett*

### THE MOTHER'S RETURN

A MONTH, sweet little ones, is past  
Since your dear mother went away, —  
And she to-morrow will return;  
To-morrow is the happy day.

O blessed tidings! thought of joy!  
The eldest heard with steady glee:  
Silent he stood; then laughed amain, —  
And shouted, "Mother, come to me!"

Louder and louder did he shout,  
With witless hope to bring her near;  
"Nay, patience! patience, little boy!  
Your tender mother cannot hear."

## *The Young Mother*

I told of hills, and far-off towns,  
And long, long vales to travel through;  
He listens, puzzled, sore perplexed,  
But he submits; what can he do?

No strife disturbs his sister's breast;  
She wars not with the Mystery  
Of time and distance, night and day;  
The bonds of our humanity,

Her joy is like an instinct, joy  
Of kitten, bird, or summer fly;  
She dances, runs without an aim,  
She chatters in her ecstasy.

Her brother now takes up the note,  
And answers back his sister's glee:  
They hug the infant in my arms,  
As if to force his sympathy.

Then, settling into fond discourse,  
We rested in the garden bower;  
While sweetly shone the evening sun  
In his departing hour.

We told o'er all that we had done, —  
Our rambles by the swift brook's side  
Far as the willow-skirted pool,  
Where two fair swans together glide.

## *To Mother*

We talked of change, of winter gone,  
Of green leaves on the hawthorn spray,  
Of birds that build their nests and sing,  
And all "since mother went away!"

To her these tales they will repeat,  
To her our new-born tribes will show,  
The goslings green, the ass's colt,  
The lambs that in the meadow go.

But see, the evening star comes forth!  
To bed the children must depart;  
A moment's heaviness they feel,  
A sadness at the heart:

'T is gone — and in a merry fit  
They run up stairs in gamesome race;  
I, too, infected by their mood,  
I could have joined the wanton chase.

Five minutes past — and, O the change!  
Asleep upon their beds they lie;  
Their busy limbs in perfect rest,  
And closed the sparkling eye.

*Dorothy Wordsworth*

## SONG FROM "THE PRINCESS"

HOME they brought her warrior dead;  
She nor swoon'd nor utter'd cry.  
All her maidens, watching, said,  
"She must weep or she will die."

## *The Young Mother*

Then they praised him, soft and low,  
Call'd him worthy to be loved,  
Truest friend and noblest foe ;  
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,  
Lightly to the warrior stept,  
Took the face-cloth from the face ;  
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,  
Set his child upon her knee —  
Like summer tempest came her tears —  
“ Sweet my child, I live for thee.”

*Alfred Tennyson*

## ALISON'S MOTHER TO THE BROOK

BROOK, of the listening grass,  
Brook of the sun-fleck't wings,  
Brook of the same wild way and flicker-  
ing spell !  
Must you be gone? Will you forever  
pass,  
After so many years and dear to tell? —  
Brook of all hoverings . .  
Brook that I kneel above ;  
Brook of my love.



## *To Mother*

Ah, but I have a charm to trouble you ;  
A spell that shall subdue  
Your all-escaping-heart, unheedful one  
And unremembering !  
Now, when I make my prayer  
To your wild brightness there  
That will but run and run,  
O mindless Water ! —  
Hark, — now will I bring  
A grace as wild, — my little yearling daughter,  
My Alison.

Heed well that threat ;  
And tremble for your hill-born liberty  
So bright to see ! —  
Your shadow-dappled way, unthwarted yet,  
And the high hills whence all your dearness  
bubbled ; —  
You, never to possess !  
For let her dip but once — O fair and fleet, —  
Here in your shallows, yes,  
Here in your silverness  
Her two blithe feet, —  
O Brook of mine, how shall your heart be  
troubled !

The heart, the bright unmothering heart of  
you,  
That never knew, —

## *The Young Mother*

(O never, more than mine of long ago.

How could we know? —)

For who should guess

The shock and smiting of that perfect-  
ness? —

The lily-thrust of those ecstatic feet

Unpityingly sweet? —

Sweet beyond all the blurred blind dreams  
that grope

The upward paths of hope?

And who could guess

The dulcet holiness,

The lilt and gladness of those jocund feet,

Unpityingly sweet?

Ah, for your coolness that shall change and  
stir

With every glee of her! —

Under the fresh amaze

That drips and glistens from her wiles and  
ways;

When the endearing air

That everywhere

Must twine and fold and follow her, shall be

Rippled to ring on ring of melody, —

Music, like shadows from the joy of her,

Small starry Reveller! —

When from her triumphings, —

All frolic wings —

There soars beyond the glories of the height,

The laugh of her delight.

## *To Mother*

And it shall sound, until  
Your heart stand still;  
Shaken to human sight;  
Struck through with tears and light;  
One with the one desire  
Unto that central Fire  
Of Love the Sun, whence all we lighted are  
Even from clod to star.

And all your glory, O most swift and  
sweet! —

And all your exultation only this;  
To be the lowly and forgotten kiss  
Beneath those feet.

You that must ever pass, —  
You of the same wild way, —  
The silver-bright good-bye without a look! —  
You that would never stay,  
For the beseeching grass . . .  
Brook! —

*Josephine Preston Peabody*

## CHILDREN'S KISSES

So; it is nightfall then.  
The valley flush  
That beckoned home the way for herds  
and men,  
Is hardly spent.

## *The Young Mother*

Down the bright pathway winds, through  
veils of hush

And wonderment.

Unuttered yet, the chime  
That tells of folding-time;  
Hardly the sun has set.

The trees are sweetly troubled with bright  
words

From new-alighted birds;—

And yet, . . .

Here,— round my neck, are come to cling  
and twine,

The arms, the folding arms, close, close and  
fain,

All mine!—

I pleaded to, in vain,

I reached for, only to their dimpled scorning,  
Down the blue halls of Morning;

Where all things else could lure them on  
and on,

Now here, now gone,—

From bush to bush, from beckoning bough  
to bough,

With bird-calls of *Come Hither!*—

. . . Ah, but now,

Now it is dusk. — And from his heaven of  
mirth,

A wilding skylark, sudden dropt to earth  
Along the last low sunbeam yellow moted,

## *To Mother*

Athrob with joy, —  
There pushes here, a little golden Boy,  
Still-gazing with great eyes.  
And wonder-wise,  
All fragranciness, all valor silver-throated,  
My daughterling, my swan,  
My Alison!

Closer than homing lambs against the bars  
At folding-time, that crowd, all mother-  
warm,  
They crowd, — they cling, they wreath;  
And thick as sparkles of the thronging stars,  
Their kisses swarm.

O Rose of being, at whose heart I breathe,  
Fold over; hold me fast  
In the dark Eden of a blinding kiss.  
And lightning heart's-desire, be still at last!  
Heart can no more, —  
Life can no more,  
Than this.

*Josephine Preston Peabody*

## MATERNAL GRIEF

DEPARTED CHILD! I could forget thee once  
Though at my bosom nursed; this woeful  
gain  
Thy dissolution brings, that in my soul

## *The Young Mother*

Is present and perpetually abides  
A shadow, never, never to be displaced  
By the returning substance, seen or touched,  
Seen by mine eyes, or clasped in my embrace.  
Absence and death how differ they ! and how  
Shall I admit that nothing can restore  
What one short sigh so easily removed ? —  
Death, life, and sleep, reality and thought,  
Assist me, God, their boundaries to know,  
O teach me calm submission to thy Will !  
The Child she mourned had overstepped the  
pale

Of Infancy, but still did breathe the air  
That sanctifies its confines, and partook  
Reflected beams of that celestial light  
To all the Little-ones on sinful earth  
Not unvouchsafed — a light that warmed  
and cheered

Those several qualities of heart and mind  
Which, in her own blest nature, rooted deep,  
Daily before the Mother's watchful eye,  
And not hers only, their peculiar charms  
Unfolded, — beauty, for its present self,  
And for its promises to future years,  
With not unfrequent rapture fondly hailed.  
Have you espied upon a dewy lawn  
A pair of Leverets each provoking each  
To a continuance of their fearless sport,  
Two separate Creatures in their several gifts  
Abounding, but so fashioned that, in all

## *To Mother*

That Nature prompts them to display, their  
looks,

Their starts of motion and their fits of rest,  
An undistinguishable style appears  
And character of gladness, as if Spring  
Lodged in their innocent bosoms, and the  
spirit

Of rejoicing morning were their own?  
Such union, in the lovely Girl maintained  
And her twin Brother, had the parent seen,  
Ere, pouncing like a ravenous bird of prey,  
Death in a moment parted them, and left  
The Mother, in her turns of anguish, worse  
Than desolate; for oft-times from the sound  
Of the survivor's sweetest voice (dear child,  
He knew it not) and from his happiest  
looks,

Did she extract the food of self-reproach,  
As one that lived ungrateful for the stay  
By Heaven afforded to uphold her maimed  
And tottering spirit. And full oft the Boy,  
Now first acquainted with distress and grief,  
Shrunk from his Mother's presence, shunned  
with fear

Her sad approach, and stole away to find,  
In his known haunts of joy where'er he  
might,

A more congenial object. But, as time  
Softened her pangs and reconciled the child  
To what he saw, he gradually returned,



## *The Young Mother*

Like a scared Bird encouraged to renew  
A broken intercourse ; and, while his eyes  
Were yet with pensive fear and gentle awe  
Turned upon her who bore him, she would  
stoop

To imprint a kiss that lacked not power to  
spread

Faint color over both their pallid cheeks,  
And stilled his tremulous lip. Thus they  
were calmed

And cheered ; and now together breathe  
fresh air

In open fields ; and when the glare of day  
Is gone, and twilight to the Mother's wish  
Befriends the observance, readily they join  
In walks whose boundary is the lost One's  
grave,

Which he with flowers had planted, finding  
there

Amusement, where the Mother does not  
miss

Dear consolation, kneeling on the turf  
In prayer, yet blending with that solemn  
rite

Of pious faith the vanities of grief ;  
For such, by pitying Angels and by Spirits  
Transferred to regions upon which the clouds  
Of our weak nature rest not, must be deemed  
Those willing tears, and unforbidden sighs,  
And all those tokens of a cherished sorrow,

## *To Mother*

Which, soothed and sweetened by the grace  
of Heaven

As now it is, seems to her own fond heart,  
Immortal as the love that gave it being.

*William Wordsworth*

## SONGS FOR MY MOTHER

### I

#### HER HANDS

MY mother's hands are cool and fair,  
They can do anything.  
Delicate mercies hide them there  
Like flowers in the spring.

When I was small and could not sleep,  
She used to come to me,  
And with my cheek upon her hand  
How sure my rest would be.

For everything she ever touched  
Of beautiful or fine,  
Their memories living in her hands  
Would warm that sleep of mine.

Her hands remember how they played  
One time in meadow streams, —  
And all the flickering song and shade  
Of water took my dreams.

## *The Young Mother*

Swift through her haunted fingers pass  
Memories of garden things ;—  
I dipped my face in flowers and grass  
And sounds of hidden wings.

One time she touched the cloud that kissed  
Brown pastures bleak and far ;—  
I leaned my cheek into a mist  
And thought I was a star.

All this was very long ago  
And I am grown ; but yet  
The hand that lured my slumber so  
I never can forget.

For still when drowsiness comes on  
It seems so soft and cool,  
Shaped happily beneath my cheek,  
Hollow and beautiful.

## II

### HER WORDS

MY mother has the prettiest tricks  
Of words and words and words.  
Her talk comes out as smooth and sleek  
As breasts of singing birds.

She shapes her speech all silver fine  
Because she loves it so.  
And her own eyes begin to shine  
To hear her stories grow.

## *To Mother*

And if she goes to make a call  
Or out to take a walk  
We leave our work when she returns  
And run to hear her talk.

We had not dreamed these things were so  
Of sorrow and of mirth.  
Her speech is as a thousand eyes  
Through which we see the earth.

God wove a web of loveliness,  
Of clouds and stars and birds,  
But made not anything at all  
So beautiful as words.

They shine around our simple earth  
With golden shadowings,  
And every common thing they touch  
Is exquisite with wings.

There's nothing poor and nothing small  
But is made fair with them.  
They are the hands of living faith  
That touch the garment's hem.

They are as fair as bloom or air,  
They shine like any star,  
And I am rich who learned from her  
How beautiful they are.

*Anna Hempstead Branch*

# MOTHERS *of* MEN





## MOTHER AND POET

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the  
east,

And one of them shot in the west by the  
sea.

Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the  
feast

And are wanting a great song for Italy  
free,

Let none look at *me*!

Yet I was a poetess only last year,

And good at my art, for a woman men  
said;

But *this* woman, *this*, who is agoniz'd here,

—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in  
her head

Forever instead.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!

What art *is* she good at, but hurting her  
breast

With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile  
at the pain?

Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong  
as you pressed

And I proud, by that test.



## *To Mother*

What art's for a woman? To hold on  
her knees

Both darlings; to feel all their arms  
round her throat,

Cling, strangle a little, to sew by de-  
grees

And 'broider the long-clothes and neat  
little coat;

To dream and to doat.

To teach them. . . . It stings there! I  
made them indeed

Speak plain the word *country*. I taught  
them, no doubt,

That a country's a thing men should die  
for at need.

I prated of liberty, rights, and about  
The tyrant cast out.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my  
beautiful eyes! . . .

I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the  
wheels

Of the guns, and denied not. But then  
the surprise

When one sits quite alone! Then one  
weeps, then one kneels!

God, how the house feels!

## *Mothers of Men*

At first, happy news came, in gay letters  
    moil'd

With my kisses, — of camp-life and glory,  
    and how

They both lov'd me ; and, soon coming home  
    to be spoil'd,

In return would fan off every fly from my  
    brow

With their green laurel-bough.

Then was triumph at Turin : “ Ancona was  
    free ! ”

And some one came out of the cheers in  
    the street,

With a face pale as stone, to say something  
    to me.

My Guido was dead ! I fell down at his  
    feet,

While they cheer'd in the street.

I bore it; friends sooth'd me; my grief  
    look'd sublime

As the ransom of Italy. One boy re-  
    main'd

To be leant on and walk'd with, recalling  
    the time

When the first grew immortal, while both  
    of them strain'd

To the height he had gain'd.

## *To Mother*

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more  
strong,  
Writ now, but in one hand, "I was not  
to faint, —  
One lov'd me for two — would be with me  
ere long:  
And *Viva l'Italia!* — *he* died for, our  
saint,  
Who forbids our complaint."

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and  
aware  
Of a presence that turn'd off the balls, —  
was impress'd  
It was Guido himself, who knew what I  
could bear,  
And how 't was impossible, quite dis-  
possess'd,  
To live on for the rest."

On which without pause, up the telegraph-  
line,  
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:  
— *Shot.*  
*Tell his mother.* Ah, ah, "his," "their"  
mother, — not "mine,"  
No voice says "*My* mother" again to me.  
What!  
You think Guido forgot?

## *Mothers of Men*

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with  
Heaven,

They drop earth's affections, conceive not  
of woe?

I think not. Themselves were too lately for-  
given

Through that Love and Sorrow which rec-  
oncil'd so

The Above and Below.

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'st  
through the dark

To the face of Thy Mother! consider I  
pray,

How we common mothers stand desolate,  
mark,

Whose sons, not being Christs, die with  
eyes turn'd away,

And no last word to say!

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature.  
We all

Have been patriots, yet each house must  
always keep one.

'T were imbecile, hewing out roads to a  
wall;

And when Italy's made, for what end is  
it done

If we have not a son?

## *To Mother*

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what  
then?

When the fair wicked queen sits no more  
at her sport  
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out  
of men?

When the guns of Cavilli with final re-  
tort

Have cut the game short?

When Venice and Rome keep their own  
jubilee,

When your flag takes all heaven for its  
white, green, and red,

When *you* have your country from mountain  
to sea,

When King Victor has Italy's crown on  
his head,

(And I have my Dead) —

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring  
your bells low,

And burn your lights faintly! *My* country  
is *there*,

Above the star prick'd by the last peak of  
snow:

My Italy's *there*, with my brave civic  
Pair,

To disfranchise despair!

## *Mothers of Men*

Forgive me. Some women bear children in  
strength,  
And bite back the cry of their pain in  
self-scorn;  
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us  
at length  
Into wail such as this — and we sit on  
forlorn  
When the man-child is born.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the  
east,  
And one of them shot in the west by the  
sea,  
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast,  
You want a great song for your Italy free,  
Let none look at *me*.

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

## MOTHER WEPT

MOTHER wept, and father sigh'd;  
With delight a-glow  
Cried the lad, "To-morrow," cried,  
"To the pit I go."

Up and down the place he sped,  
Greeted old and young,  
Far and wide the tidings spread,  
Clapp'd his hands and sung.

## *To Mother*

Came his cronies, some to gaze  
Rapt in wonder ; some  
Free with counsel ; some with praise ;  
Some with envy dumb.

“ May he,” many a gossip cried,  
“ Be from peril kept ” ;  
Father hid his face and sighed,  
Mother turned and wept.

*Joseph Skipsey*

## HOW 'S MY BOY ?

- “ Ho, Sailor of the sea !  
How 's my boy — my boy ? ”
- “ What 's your boy's name, good wife,  
And in what good ship sail'd he ? ”
- “ My boy John —  
He that went to sea —  
What care I for the ship, sailor ?  
My boy 's my boy to me.
- “ You come back from sea,  
And not know my John ?  
I might as well have ask'd some landsman  
Yonder down in the town.  
There 's not an ass in all the parish  
But he knows my John.
- “ How 's my boy — my boy ?  
And unless you let me know



## *Mothers of Men*

I'll swear you are no sailor,  
Blue jacket or no,  
Brass buttons or no, sailor,  
Anchor or crown or no!  
Sure his ship was the Jolly Briton" —  
"Speak low, woman, speak low!"  
"And why should I speak low, sailor,  
About my own boy John?  
If I was loud as I am proud  
I'd sing him over the town!  
Why should I speak low, sailor?"  
"That good ship went down."

"How's my boy — my boy?  
What care I for the ship, sailor?  
I was never aboard her.  
Be she afloat or be she aground,  
Sinking or swimming, I'll be bound,  
Her owners can afford her!  
I say how's my John?"  
"Every man on board went down,  
Every man aboard her."

"How's my boy — my boy?  
What care I for the men, sailor?  
I'm not their mother —  
How's my boy — my boy?  
Tell me of him and no other!  
How's my boy — my boy?"

*Sidney Dobell*

## *To Mother*

### THE SAD MOTHER

O WHEN the half-light weaves  
Wild shadows on the floor,  
How ghostly come the withered leaves  
Stealing about my door!

I sit and hold my breath,  
Lone in the lonely house;  
Naught breaks the silence still as death,  
Only a creeping mouse.

The patter of leaves, it may be,  
But liker patter of feet,  
The small feet of my own baby  
That never felt the heat.

The small feet of my son,  
Cold as the graveyard sod;  
My little, dumb, unchristened one  
That may not win to God.

“Come in, dear babe,” I cry,  
Opening the door so wide.  
The leaves go stealing softly by;  
How dark it is outside!

And though I kneel and pray  
Long on the threshold-stone  
The little feet press on their way,  
And I am ever alone.

*Katharine Tynan Hinkson*

## *Mothers of Men*

### AN ABORIGINAL MOTHER'S LAMENT

STILL farther would I fly, my child,  
To make thee safer yet,  
From the unsparing white man,  
With his dread hand murder-wet!  
I'll bear thee on as I have borne  
With stealthy steps wind-fleet,  
But the dark night shrouds the forest,  
And thorns are in my feet.

O moan not! I would give this braid —  
Thy father's gift to me —  
But for a single palmful  
Of water now for thee.

Ah! spring not to his name — no more  
To glad us may he come —  
He is smoldering into ashes  
Beneath the blasted gum:  
All charred and blasted by the fire  
The white man kindled there,  
And fed with our slaughtered kindred  
Till heaven-high went its glare!

And but for thee, I would their fire  
Had eaten me as fast!  
Hark! Hark! I hear his death-cry  
Yet lengthening up the blast!

## *To Mother*

But no—when his bound hands had signed  
The way that we should fly,  
On the roaring pyre flung bleeding—  
I saw thy father die!

No more shall his loud tomahawk  
Be plied to win our cheer,  
Or the shining fish pools darken  
Beneath his shadowing spear:  
The fading tracks of his fleet foot  
Shall guide not as before,  
And the mountain-spirits mimic  
His hunting call no more!

O moan not! I would give this braid—  
Thy father's gift to me—  
For but a single palmful  
Of water now for thee.

*Charles Harpur*

## LINES TO MY MOTHER'S PICTURE

O THAT those lips had language! Life has  
passed  
With me but roughly since I heard thee  
last.  
Those lips are thine,—thy own sweet smile  
I see,  
The same that oft in childhood solaced  
me;

## *Mothers of Men*

Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,  
“Grieve not, my child; chase all thy fears  
away!”

The meek intelligence of those dear eyes  
(Blest be the art that can immortalize,  
The art that baffles time’s tyrannic claim  
To quench it!) here shines on me still the  
same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,  
O welcome guest, though unexpected here!  
Who bid’st me honor with an artless song,  
Affectionate, a mother lost so long.  
I will obey, not willingly alone,  
But gladly, as the precept were her own;  
And, while that face renews my filial grief,  
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,  
Shall steep me in Elysian revery,  
A momentary dream that thou art she.

My mother! when I learned that thou  
wast dead,  
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?  
Hovered thy spirit o’er thy sorrowing son,  
Wretch even then, Life’s journey just begun?  
Perhaps thou gav’st me, though unfelt, a  
kiss;  
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—  
Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes.  
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,  
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,

## *To Mother*

And, turning from my nursery window, drew  
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu.  
But was it such? It was. Where thou art  
gone,

Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.  
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,  
The parting words shall pass my lips no more!  
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,

Oft gave me promise of thy quick return;  
What ardently I wished I long believed,  
And, disappointed still, was still deceived;  
By expectation every day beguiled,  
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.  
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,  
Till, all my stock of infant sorrows spent,  
I learned at last submission to my lot;  
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard  
no more,  
Children not thine have trod my nursery  
floor;  
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,  
Drew me to school along the public way,  
Delighted with my bawble coach, and wrapped  
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,  
'T is now become a history little known,  
That once we called the pastoral house our  
own.

## *Mothers of Men*

Short-lived possession ! but the record fair,  
That memory keeps of all thy kindness  
there,

Still outlives many a storm that has effaced  
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.  
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,  
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly  
laid, —

All this, and, more endearing still than all,  
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,  
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and  
breaks

That humor interposed too often makes, —  
All this, still legible in memory's page,  
And still to be so to my latest age,  
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay  
Such honors to thee as my numbers may;  
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,  
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed  
here,

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore  
the hours

When, playing with thy vesture's tissued  
flowers,

The violet, the pink, and jessamine,  
I pricked them into paper with a pin,  
(And thou wast happier than myself the  
while,

Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head,  
and smile,) —



## *To Mother*

Could those few pleasant days again appear,  
Might one wish bring them, would I wish  
them here?

I would not trust my heart,—the dear de-  
light

Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.

But no,—what here we call our life is such,  
So little to be loved, and thou so much,  
That I should ill requite thee to constrain,  
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from albion's  
coast

(The storms all weathered and the ocean  
crossed)

Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,  
Where spices breathe and brighter seasons  
smile ;

There sits quiescent on the floods, that show  
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,  
While airs impregnated with incense play  
Around her, fanning light her streamers  
gay, —

So thou, with sails how swift ! hast reached  
the shore,

Where tempests never beat, nor billows roar ;  
And thy loved consort, on the dangerous tide  
Of life, long since has anchored by thy side.  
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,  
Always from port withheld, always dis-  
tressed,—

## *Mothers of Men*

Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-  
tossed,

Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass  
lost ;

And day by day some current's thwarting  
force

Sets me more distant from a prosperous  
course.

Yet O, the thought that thou art safe, and  
he ! —

That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.  
My boast is not that I deduce my birth  
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the  
earth ;

But higher far my proud pretensions rise, —  
The son of parents passed into the skies.

And now farewell ! — Time, unrevoked, has  
run

His wonted course, yet what I wished is  
done.

By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,  
I seem to have lived my childhood o'er  
again, —

To have renewed the joys that once were mine  
Without the sin of violating thine ;

And while the wings of Fancy still are free,  
And I can view this mimic show of thee,  
Time has but half succeeded in his theft, —  
Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

*William Cowper*

## *To Mother*

### MY MOTHER'S BIBLE

THIS book is all that's left me now, —  
Tears will unbidden start, —  
With faltering lip and throbbing brow  
I press it to my heart.  
For many generations past,  
Here is our family tree ;  
My mother's hands this Bible clasped,  
She, dying, gave it me.

Ah ! well do I remember those  
Whose names these records bear ;  
Who round the hearthstone used to  
close,  
After the evening prayer,  
And speak of what these pages said  
In tones my heart would thrill !  
Though they are with the silent dead,  
Here are they living still !

My father read this holy book  
To brothers, sisters, dear ;  
How calm was my poor mother's look,  
Who loved God's word to hear !  
Her angel face, — I see it yet !  
What thronging memories come !  
Again that little group is met  
Within the halls of home !

## *Mothers of Men*

Thou truest friend man ever knew,  
Thy constancy I've tried;  
When all were false, I found thee true,  
My counselor and guide.  
The mines of earth no treasures give  
That could this volume buy;  
In teaching me the way to live,  
It taught me how to die!

*George Pope Morris*

## TWO SONS

I HAVE two sons, wife —  
Two and yet the same;  
One his wild way runs, wife,  
Bringing us to shame.

The one is bearded, sunburnt, grim, and  
fights across the sea,  
The other is a little child who sits upon your  
knee.

One is fierce and cold, wife,  
As the wayward deep;  
Him no arms could hold, wife,  
Him no breast could keep.  
He has tried our hearts for many a year, not  
broken them; for he  
Is still the sinless little one that sits upon  
your knee.

## *To Mother*

One may fall in fight, wife,  
Is he not our son?  
Pray with all your might, wife,  
For the wayward one;  
Pray for the dark, rough soldier, who fights  
across the sea,  
Because you love the little shade who smiles  
upon your knee.

One across the foam, wife,  
As I speak may fall;  
But this one at home, wife,  
Cannot die at all.  
They both are only one; and how thankful  
should we be,  
We cannot lose the darling son who sits upon  
your knee!

*Robert Buchanan*

## MOTHER TO SON

BEFORE I knew the love of man  
The lovely dream of you began.  
When I said, "Jesus meek and mild,"  
My Jesus was a little child.  
I nursed the kitten on my knee,  
And nursed you where no eye could see.  
When I grew up to woman's grace  
I saw you in your father's face,

## *Mothers of Men*

Your hands were beating at my breast,  
And gave my womanhood no rest,  
Your little soul called each to each,  
And laid bright heaven in our reach.  
My body fed your body, son,  
But birth 's a swift thing, swiftly done,  
Compared to one-and-twenty years  
Of feeding you with spirit's tears.  
I could not make your mind and soul,  
But my glad hands have kept you whole,  
And tears have kept God's pastures green,  
And washed the temple sweet and clean.  
Think you that I have lived in vain  
These years of wonder, joy, and pain?  
The years when Jesus meek and mild  
Was my beloved little child!  
And when the first shy touch of things  
Waked in my heart a thousand springs,  
And bade me open childhood's gate  
And give my woman's hand to fate!  
The moment when your groping hands  
Bound me to life with ruthless bands,  
When all my living became a prayer,  
And all my days built up a stair  
For your young feet that trod behind,  
That you an aspiring way should find!  
Think you that life can give you pain,  
Which does not stab in me again?  
Think you that life can give you pleasure  
Which is not my undying treasure?

## *To Mother*

Think you that life can give you shame  
Which does not make my pride go lame?  
And you can do no evil thing  
Which sears not me with poisoned sting.  
Because of all that I have done,  
Remember me in life, O son!  
Keep that proud body fine and fair,  
My love is monumented there.  
For my love make no woman weep,  
For my love hold no woman cheap,  
And see you give no woman scorn  
For that dark night when you were born.  
Beloved, all my years belong  
To you, go thread them for a song.

*Irene Rutherford McLeod*

## ONE MOTHER

MARY!

I'm quite alone in all the world,  
Into such bright sharp pain of anguish  
hurled  
I cannot pray wise comfortable things;  
Death's plunged me deep in hell, and given  
me wings  
For terrible strange vastnesses; no hand  
In all this empty spirit-driven space; I stand  
Alone, and whimpering in my soul. I plod  
Among wild stars, and hide my face from  
God.

## *Mothers of Men*

God frightens me. He's strange. I know  
Him not.

And all my usual prayers I have forgot:  
But you—you had a son—I remember now!  
You are not Mary of the virgin brow!  
You agonized for Jesus! You went down  
Into the ugly depths for him. Your crown  
Is my crown! I've seen you in the street,  
Begging your way for broken bread and  
meat:

I've seen you in trams, in shops, among old  
faces,

Young eyes, brave lips, broad backs, in all  
the places

Where women work, and weep, in pain, in  
pride.

Your hands were gnarled that held him  
when he died!

Not the fair hands that painters give you,  
white

And slim. You never had such hands: night  
And day you laboured, night and day, from  
child

To woman. You were never soft and mild,  
But strong-limbed, patient, brown-skinned  
from the sun,

Deep-bosomed, brave-eyed, holy, holy One!  
I know you now! I seek you, Mary! Spread  
Your compassionate skirts! I bring to you  
my dead!



## *To Mother*

This was my man. I bore him. I did not  
know

Then how he crowned me, but I felt it so.  
He was my all the world. I loved him best  
When he was helpless, clamouring at my  
breast.

Mothers are made like that. You'll under-  
stand

Who held your Jesus helpless in your hand  
And loved his impotence. But as he grew  
I watched him, always jealously, I knew  
Each line of his young body, every tone  
Of speech; his pains, his triumphs were my  
own.

I saw the down come on his cheeks with  
dread,

And soon I had to reach to hold his head  
And stroke his mop of hair. I watched his eyes  
When women crossed his ways, and I was  
wise

For him who had no wisdom. He was young,  
And loathed my care, and lashed me with  
youth's tongue.

Splendidly merciless, casual of age, his scorn  
Was sweet to me of whom his strength was  
born.

. . . Besides, when he was more than six  
foot tall

He kept the smile he had when he was  
small! . . .

## *Mothers of Men*

And still no woman had him. I was glad  
Of that — and then O God! The world ran  
mad!

Almost before I knew, this noise was war;  
Death and not women took the son I bore . . .

You 'll know him when you see him: first of  
all

Because he 'll smile that way when he was  
small;

And then his eyes! They never changed  
from blue

To duller grey, as other children's do,  
But like his childish dreams he kept his  
eyes

Vivid, and deeply clear, and vision wise.  
Seek for him, Mary! Bright among the  
ghosts

Of other women's sons he 'll star those hosts  
Of shining boys! (He always topped his  
class

At school!) Lean forward, Mary, as they  
pass,

And touch him! When you see his eyes  
you 'll weep

And think him your own Jesus! Let him  
sleep

In your deep bosom, Mary, then you 'll  
see

His lashes, how they curl, so childishly

## *To Mother*

You'll weep again, and rock him on your  
heart

As I did once, that night we had to part.  
He'll come to you all bloody and be-mired,  
But let him sleep, my dear, for he'll be tired,  
And very shy. If he'd come home to me  
I would n't ask the neighbours in to tea . . .  
He always hated crowds . . . I'd let him  
be. . . .

And then perhaps you'll take him by the  
hand

And comfort him from fear when he must  
stand

Before God's dreadful throne; then, will you  
call

That boy whose bullet made my darling fall,  
And take him by the other hand, and say . . .

*" O God, whose Son the hands of men did  
slay,*

*These are Thy children who do take away  
The sins of the world. . . ."*

*Irene Rutherford McLeod*

## *Mothers of Men*

### AN ENGLISH MOTHER <sup>1</sup>

EVERY week of every season out of English  
ports go forth,  
White of sail or white of trail, East, or West,  
or South, or North,  
Scattering like a flight of pigeons, half a  
hundred home-sick ships,  
Bearing half a hundred striplings — each with  
kisses on his lips  
Of some silent mother, fearful lest she shows  
herself too fond,  
Giving him to bush or desert as one pays a  
sacred bond,  
— Tell us, you who hide your heartbreak,  
which is sadder, when all 's done,  
To repine an English mother, or to roam, an  
English son?

You who shared your babe's first sorrow when  
his cheek no longer pressed  
On the perfect, snow-and-roseleaf beauty of  
your mother-breast,  
In the rigor of his nurture was your woman's  
mercy mute,  
Knowing he was doomed to exile with the  
savage and the brute?

<sup>1</sup> By permission of the author, Robert Underwood Johnson. From *Saint-Gaudens and other Poems*. Copyright, 1908, by Robert Underwood Johnson.

## *To Mother*

Did you school yourself to absence all his  
adolescent years,  
That, though you be torn with parting, he  
should never see the tears?  
Now his ship has left the offing for the many-  
mouthèd sea,  
This your guerdon, empty heart, by empty  
bed to bend the knee?

And if he be but the latest thus to leave your  
dwindling board,  
Is a sorrow less for being added to a sor-  
row's hoard?  
Is the mother-pain duller that to-day his  
brothers stand,  
Facing ambuscades of Congo, or alarms from  
Zululand?  
Toil, where blizzards drift the snow like  
smoke across the plains of death?  
Faint, where tropic fens at morning steam  
with fever-laden breath?  
Die, that in some distant river's veins the  
English blood may run —  
Mississippi, Yangtze, Ganges, Nile, Mac-  
kenzie, Amazon?

Ah! you still must wait and suffer in a soli-  
tude untold,  
While your sisters of the nations call you  
passive, call you cold —

## *Mothers of Men*

Still must scan the news of sailings, breath-  
less search the slow gazette,  
Find the dreadful name . . . and, later, get  
his blithe farewell! And yet —  
Shall the lonely hearthstone shame the legions  
who have died  
Grudging not the price their country pays  
for progress and for pride?  
— Nay; but, England, do not ask us thus to  
emulate your scars  
Until women's tears are reckoned in the  
budgets of your wars.

*Robert Underwood Johnson*

## MATRES DOLOROSÆ

YE Spartan mothers, gentle ones,  
Of lion-hearted, loving sons  
Fall'n, the flower of English youth,  
To a barbarous foe in a land uncouth: —

O what a delicate sacrifice!  
Unequal the stake and costly the price  
As when the queen of Love deplor'd  
Her darling by the wild beast gor'd.

They rode to war as if to the hunt,  
But ye at home, ye bore the brunt,  
Bore the siege of torturing fears,  
Fed your hope on the bread of tears.

## *To Mother*

Proud and spotless warriors they  
With love or sword to lead the way;  
For ye had cradled heart and hand,  
The commander hearken'd to your com-  
mand.

Ah, weeping mothers, now all is o'er,  
Ye know your honor and mourn no more:  
Nor ask ye a name in England's story,  
Who gave your dearest for her glory.

*Robert Bridges*

## THE ABSENT SOLDIER SON

LORD, I am weeping. As Thou wilt, O Lord,  
Do with him as Thou wilt; but O my God,  
Let him come back to die! Let not the fowls  
O' the air defile the body of my child,  
My own fair child, that when he was a babe,  
I lift up in my arms and gave to Thee!  
Let not his garment, Lord, be vilely parted,  
Nor the fine linen which these hands have  
spun

Fall to the stranger's lot! Shall the wild bird,  
That would have pilfered of the ox, this year  
Disdain the pens and stalls? Shall her blind  
young

That on the fleck and moult of brutish  
beasts

Had been too happy, sleep in cloth of gold

## *Mothers of Men*

Whereof each thread is to this beating heart  
As a peculiar darling? Lo, the flies  
Hum o'er him! lo, a feather from the crow  
Falls in his parted lips! Lo, his dead eyes  
See not the raven! Lo, the worm, the worm,  
Creeps from his festering corse? My God!  
my God!

. . . . .  
O Lord, Thou doest well. I am content:  
If Thou have need of him he shall not stay.  
But as one calleth to a servant, saying  
“At such a time be with me,” so, O Lord,  
Call him to Thee! O, bid him not in haste  
Straight whence he standeth. Let him lay  
aside

The soiled tools of labor. Let him wash  
His hands of blood. Let him array himself  
Meet for his Lord, pure from the sweat and  
fume

Of corporal travail! Lord, if he must die,  
Let him die here. O, take him where Thou  
gavest!

*Sidney Dobell*

## MOTHER AND SON

BRIGHTLY for him the future smiled,  
The world was all untried;  
He had been a boy, almost a child,  
In your household till he died.



## *To Mother*

And you saw him young and strong and fair  
But yesterday depart ;  
And you now know he is lying there  
Shot to death through the heart !

Alas, for the step so proud and true  
That struck on the war-path's track ;  
Alas, to go, as he went from you,  
And to come, as they brought him back !

One shining curl from that bright young head,  
Held sacred in your home,  
Is all that you have to keep in his stead  
In the years that are to come.

You may claim of his beauty and his youth  
Only this little part —  
It is not much with which to stanch  
The wound in a mother's heart !

It is not much with which to dry  
The bitter tears that flow ;  
Not much in your empty hands to lie  
As the seasons come and go.

Yet he has not lived and died in vain,  
For proudly you may say  
He has left a name without a stain  
For your tears to wash away.

## *Mothers of Men*

And evermore shall your life be blest,  
Though your treasures now are few,  
Since you gave for your country's good the  
best  
God ever gave to you!

*Phæbe Cary*

## MOTHERHOOD

MOTHER of Christ long slain, forth glided  
she,

Following the children joyously astir  
Under the cedars and the olive-tree,  
Pausing to let their laughter float to her.

Each voice an echo of a voice more dear,  
She saw a little Christ in every face.

When lo! another woman, passing near,  
Yearned o'er the tender life that filled the  
place,

And Mary sought the woman's hand, and  
said:

"I know thee not, yet know thee memory-  
tossed

And what hath led thee here, as I am  
led —

These bring to thee a child beloved and  
lost."

"How radiant was my little one!

And He was fair,

## *To Mother*

Yea fairer than the fairest sun,  
And like its rays through amber spun

His sun-bright hair,  
Still, I can see it shine and shine!"

"Even so," the woman said, "was mine."

"His ways were ever darling ways,"

And Mary smiled, —

"So soft and clinging! Glad relays  
Of love were all his precious days —

My little child  
Was like an infinite that gleamed."

"Even so was mine," the woman dreamed.

Then whispered Mary: "Tell me, thou  
Of thine!" And she:

"Oh, mine was rosy as a bough  
Blooming with roses, sent, somehow,  
To bloom for me!

His balmy fingers left a thrill  
Within my breast that warms me still."

Then gazed she down some wilder, darker  
hour

And said, when Mary questioned knowing  
not:

"Who art thou, mother of so sweet a  
flower?"

"I am the mother of Iscariot."

*Agnes Lee*

# CHRISTMAS MOTHER POEMS





## HYMN ON THE NATIVITY

It was the winter wild,  
While the heaven-born child  
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger  
lies ;  
Nature, in awe of him,  
Had doffed her gaudy trim,  
With her great Master so to sympathize :  
It was no season then for her  
To wanton with the sun, her lusty para-  
mour.

Only with speeches fair  
She wooes the gentle air,  
To hide her guilty front with innocent  
snow ;  
And on her naked shame,  
Pollute with sinful blame,  
The saintly veil of maiden-white to throw ;  
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes  
Should look so near upon her foul deform-  
ities.

But he, her fears to cease,  
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace :  
She, crowned with olive green, came softly  
sliding

## *To Mother*

Down through the turning sphere,  
His ready harbinger,  
    With turtle wing the amorous clouds di-  
        viding;  
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,  
She strikes a universal peace through sea  
    and land.

No war or battle's sound  
Was heard the world around:  
    The idle spear and shield were high up-  
        hung;  
The hookèd chariot stood  
Unstained with hostile blood;  
    The trumpet spake not to the armèd  
        throng;  
And kings sat still with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovereign lord  
    was by.

But peaceful was the night,  
Wherein the Prince of Light  
    His reign of peace upon the earth be-  
        gan:  
The winds, with wonder whist,  
Smoothly the waters kissed,  
    Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the  
    charmèd wave.

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

The stars, with deep amaze,  
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,  
    Bending one way their precious influence;  
And will not take their flight,  
For all the morning light,  
    Or Lucifer had often warned them thence;  
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,  
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid  
    them go.

And though the shady gloom  
Had given day her room,  
    The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
And hid his head for shame,  
As his inferior flame  
    The new-enlightened world no more should  
    need;  
He saw a greater sun appear  
Than his bright throne, or burning axle-  
    tree, could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,  
Or ere the point of dawn,  
    Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;  
Full little thought they then  
That the mighty Pan  
    Was kindly come to live with them below;  
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy  
    keep.



## *To Mother*

When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet,  
    As never was by mortal fingers strook,  
Divinely warbled voice  
Answering the stringèd noise,  
    As all their souls in blissful rapture took:  
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,  
With thousand echoes still prolongs each  
    heavenly close.

Nature, that heard such sound,  
Beneath the hollow round  
    Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrill-  
    ing,  
Now was almost won,  
To think her part was done,  
    And that her reign had here its last ful-  
    filling;  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier  
    union.

At last surrounds their sight  
A globe of circular light,  
    That with long beams the shame-faced  
    night arrayed;  
The helmèd cherubim,  
And sworded seraphim,  
    Are seen in glittering ranks with wings  
    displayed,

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

Harping in loud and solemn quire,  
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-  
born heir.

Such music as 't is said  
Before was never made,  
But when of old the sons of morning sung,  
While the Creator great  
His constellations set,  
And the well-balanced world on hinges  
hung,  
And cast the dark foundations deep,  
And bid the weltering waves their oozy chan-  
nel keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,  
Once bless our human ears,  
If ye have power to touch our senses so;  
And let your silver chime  
Move in melodious time;  
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ  
blow;  
And, with your ninefold harmony,  
Make up full concert to the angelic sym-  
phony.

For, if such holy song  
Enwrap our fancy long,  
Time will run back, and fetch the age of  
gold;

## *To Mother*

And speckled Vanity  
Will sicken soon and die,  
    And leprous Sin will melt from earthly  
        mould;  
And Hell itself will pass away,  
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peer-  
    ing day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then  
Will down return to men,  
    Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories  
        wearing,  
Mercy will sit between,  
Throned in celestial sheen,  
    With radiant feet the tissued clouds down  
        steering;  
And Heaven, as at some festival,  
Will open wide the gates of her high palace  
    hall.

But wisest Fate says no,  
This must not yet be so;  
    The babe yet lies in smiling infancy,  
That on the bitter cross  
Must redeem our loss,  
    So both himself and us to glorify:  
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep,  
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder  
    through the deep,

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

With such a horrid clang  
As on Mount Sinai rang,  
    While the red fire and smouldering clouds  
        outbrake ;  
The aged earth aghast,  
With terror of that blast,  
    Shall from the surface to the center shake ;  
When, at the world's last session,  
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall  
    spread his throne.

And then at last our bliss,  
Full and perfect is,  
    But now begins ; for, from this happy day,  
The old dragon, under ground,  
In straiter limits bound,  
    Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway ;  
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,  
Swings the scaly horror of his folded tail.

The oracles are dumb ;  
No voice or hideous hum  
    Runs through the archèd roof in words  
        deceiving.  
Apollo from his shrine  
Can no more divine,  
    With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos  
        leaving.  
No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,  
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

## *To Mother*

The lonely mountains o'er,  
And the resounding shore,  
    A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;  
From haunted spring and dale,  
Edged with poplar pale,  
    The parting Genius is with sighing sent;  
With flower-inwoven tresses torn,  
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,  
And on the holy hearth,  
    The Lars and Lemures mourn with midnight plaint.  
In urns and altars round,  
A drear and dying sound  
    Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;  
And the chill marble seems to sweat,  
While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baälim  
Forsake their temples dim  
    With that twice-battered God of Palestine;  
And moonèd Ashtaroath,  
Heaven's queen and mother both,  
    Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

The Libyac Hammon shrinks his horn ;  
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded  
Thammuz mourn.

And sullen Moloch, fled,  
Hath left in shadows dread  
His burning idol all of blackest hue :  
In vain with cymbals' ring  
They call the grisly king,  
In dismal dance about the furnace  
blue :

The brutish gods of Nile as fast,  
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen  
In Memphian grove or green,  
Trampling the unshowered grass with  
lowings loud ;  
Nor can he be at rest  
Within his sacred chest,  
Naught but profoundest hell can be his  
shroud ;  
In vain with timbreled anthems dark  
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his wor-  
shipped ark.

He feels from Judah's land  
The dreaded infant's hand,  
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky  
eyne ;

## *To Mother*

Nor all the gods beside  
Longer dare abide,

Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;  
Our babe, to show his Godhead true,  
Can in his swaddling bands control the  
damned crew.

So, when the sun in bed,  
Curtained with cloudy red,

Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
The flocking shadows pale  
Troop to the infernal jail,  
Each fettered ghost slips to his several  
grave ;

And the yellow-skirted fays  
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their  
moon-loved maze.

But see, the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her babe to rest;

Time is our tedious song should here have  
ending :

Heaven's youngest-teemèd star  
Hath fixed her polished car,

Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp  
attending ;

And all about the courtly stable  
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serv-  
iceable.

*John Milton*

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

### A MOTHER IN EGYPT

About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt :  
and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die,  
from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne,  
even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill.

Is the noise of grief in the palace over the  
river

For this silent one at my side?

There came a hush in the night, and he rose  
with his hands a-quiver

Like lotus petals adrift on the swing of the  
tide.

O small cold hands, the day groweth old for  
sleeping!

O small still feet, rise up, for the hour is  
late!

Rise up, my son, for I hear them mourning  
and weeping

In the temple down by the gate!

Hushed is the face that was wont to brighten  
with laughter

When I sang at the mill;

And silence unbroken shall greet the sorrowful  
dawns hereafter, —

The house shall be still.

Voice after voice takes up the burden of  
wailing —



## *To Mother*

Do you not heed, do you not hear? — in the  
high priest's house by the wall.

But mine is the grief, and their sorrow is all  
unvailing.

Will he awake at their call?

Something I saw of the broad dim wings  
half folding

The passionless brow.

Something I saw of the sword that the shad-  
owy hands were holding, —

What matters it now?

I held you close, dear face, as I knelt and  
harkened

To the wind that cried last night like a soul  
in sin,

When the broad bright stars dropped down  
and the soft sky darkened

And the presence moved therein.

I have heard men speak in the market-place  
of the city,

Low-voiced, in a breath,

Of a God who is stronger than ours, and  
who knows not changing nor pity,

Whose anger is death.

Nothing I know of the lords of the outland  
races,

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

But Amud is gentle and Hathor the mother  
    is mild,  
And who would descend from the light of  
    the Peaceful Places  
To war on a child?

Yet here he lies, with a scarlet pomegranate  
    petal  
Blown down on his cheek.  
The slow sun sinks to the sand like a shield  
    of some burnished metal,  
But he does not speak.  
I have called, I have sung, but he neither  
    will hear nor waken;  
So lightly, so whitely, he lies in the curve  
    of my arm,  
Like a feather let fall from the bird the  
    arrow hath taken, —  
Who could see him, and harm?

“The swallow flies home to her sleep in the  
    eaves of the altar,  
And the crane to her nest.” —  
So do we sing o’er the mill, and why, ah,  
    why should I falter,  
Since he goes to his rest?  
Does he play in their flowers as he played  
    among these with his mother?

## *To Mother*

Do the gods smile downward and love him  
and give him their care?  
Guard him well, O ye gods, till I come; lest  
the wrath of that Other  
Should reach to him there.

*Marjorie L. C. Pickthall*

## CHRISTMAS CAROL

As Joseph was a-waukin',  
He heard an angel sing,  
"This night shall be the birthnight  
Of Christ our heavenly King.

"His birth-bed shall be neither  
In housen nor in hall,  
Nor in the place of paradise,  
But in the oxen's stall.

"He neither shall be rockèd  
In silver nor in gold,  
But in the wooden manger  
That lieth in the mould.

"He neither shall be washen  
With white wine nor with red,  
But with the fair spring water  
That on you shall be shed.

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

“He neither shall be clothèd  
In purple nor in pall,  
But in the fair, white linen  
That usen babies all.”

As Joseph was a-waukin’,  
Thus did the angel sing,  
And Mary’s son at midnight  
Was born to be our King.

Then be you glad, good people,  
At this time of the year;  
And light you up your candles,  
For His star it shineth clear.

*Unknown*

### REGINA CÆLI

SAY, did his sisters wonder what could  
Joseph see  
In a mild, silent little Maid like thee?  
And was it awful in that narrow house,  
With God for Babe and Spouse?  
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each  
one  
Apt to find Him in Husband and in  
Son,  
Nothing to thee came strange in this.  
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss:

## *To Mother*

Wondrous, for, though  
True Virgin lives not but does know,  
(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd)  
That God lies really in her breast,  
Of thine He made His special nest  
And so  
All mothers worship little feet,  
And kiss the very ground they 've trod;  
But, ah, thy little Baby sweet  
Who was indeed thy God!  
*Coventry Patmore*

## CHRIST THE MENDICANT

A STRANGER, to His own  
He came; and one alone,  
Who knew not sin,  
His lowliness believed,  
And in her soul conceived  
To let Him in.

He naked was, and she  
Of her humanity  
A garment wove:  
He hungered; and she gave,  
What most His heart did crave,  
A Mother's love.

*John Banister Tabb*

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

### A CHRISTMAS CAROL

THERE 's a song in the air !  
There 's a star in the sky !  
There 's a mother's deep prayer  
And a baby's low cry !  
And the star rains its fire while the Beautiful sing,  
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king.

There 's a tumult of joy  
O'er the wonderful birth,  
For the virgin's sweet boy  
Is the Lord of the earth.  
Ay ! the star rains its fire and the Beautiful sing,  
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king.

In the light of that star  
Lie the ages impearled ;  
And that song from afar  
Has swept over the world.  
Every hearth is aflame, and the Beautiful sing  
In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King.

We rejoice in the light,  
And we echo the song  
That comes down through the night  
From the heavenly throng.

## *To Mother*

Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,  
And we greet in his cradle our Saviour and  
King.

*Josiah Gilbert Holland*

### A LITTLE CHILD'S HYMN

THOU that once, on mother's knee,  
Wast a little one like me,  
When I wake or go to bed  
Lay thy hands about my head;  
Let me feel thee very near,  
Jesus Christ, our Saviour dear.

Be beside me in the light,  
Close by me through all the night;  
Make me gentle, kind, and true,  
Do what mother bids me do;  
Help and cheer me when I fret,  
And forgive when I forget.

Once wast thou in cradle laid,  
Baby bright in manger-shade,  
With the oxen and the cows,  
And the lambs outside the house:  
Now thou art above the sky:  
Canst thou hear a baby cry?

Thou art nearer when we pray,  
Since thou art so far away;

## *Christmas Mother Poems*

Thou my little hymn wilt hear,  
Jesus Christ, our Saviour dear,  
Thou that once, on mother's knee,  
Wast a little one like me.

*Francis Turner Palgrave*

### A CAROL

HE came all so still  
Where His mother was,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still  
Where His mother lay,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the spray.

He came all so still  
To His mother's bower,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the flower.

Mother and maiden  
Was never none but she!  
Well might such a lady  
God's mother be.

*Unknown.*





# LULLABIES





## SEA SLUMBER-SONG

SEA-BIRDS are asleep,  
The world forgets to weep,  
Sea murmurs her soft slumber-song  
On the shadowy sand  
Of this elfin land ;  
“ I, the Mother mild,  
Hush thee, O my child,  
Forget the voices wild !  
Isles in elfin light  
Dream, the rocks and caves,  
Lull'd by whispering waves,  
Veil their marbles bright,  
Foam glimmers faintly white  
Upon the shelly sand  
Of this elfin land ;  
Sea-sound, like violins,  
To slumber woos and wins,  
I murmur my soft slumber-song,  
Leave woes, and wails, and sins,  
Ocean's shadowy night  
Breathes good-night,  
Good-night ! ”

*Roden Noel*

## *To Mother*

### SWEET AND LOW

SWEET and low, sweet and low,  
    Wind of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow,  
    Wind of the western sea!  
Over the rolling waters go,  
Come from the dying moon and blow,  
    Blow him again to me;  
While my little one, while my pretty one,  
    sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,  
    Father will come to thee soon;  
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,  
    Father will come to thee soon;  
Father will come to his babe in the nest,  
Silver sails all out of the west  
    Under the silver moon;  
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,  
    sleep.

*Alfred Tennyson*

### A CRADLE HYMN

HUSH! my dear, lie still and slumber,  
    Holy angels guard thy bed!  
Heavenly blessings without number  
    Gently falling on thy head.

## *Lullabies*

Sleep, my babe ; thy food and raiment,  
House and home, thy friends provide ;  
All without thy care or payment :  
All thy wants are well supplied.

How much better thou 'rt attended  
Than the Son of God could be,  
When from heaven He descended  
And became a child like thee !

Soft and easy is thy cradle :  
Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay,  
When His birthplace was a stable  
And His softest bed was hay.

Blessèd babe ! what glorious features —  
Spotless fair, divinely bright !  
Must he dwell with brutal creatures ?  
How could angels bear the sight ?

Was there nothing but a manger  
Cursèd sinners could afford  
To receive the heavenly stranger ?  
Did they thus affront their Lord ?

Soft, my child : I did not chide thee,  
Though my song might sound too hard ;  
'T is thy mother sits beside thee,  
And her arms shall be thy guard.

## *To Mother*

Yet to read the shameful story  
How the Jews abused their King,  
How they served the Lord of Glory,  
Makes me angry while I sing.

See the kinder shepherds round Him,  
Telling wonders from the sky!  
Where they sought Him, there they found  
Him,  
With His Virgin mother by.

See the lovely babe a-dressing;  
Lovely infant, how He smiled!  
When He wept, the mother's blessing  
Soothed and hushed the holy child.

Lo, He slumbers in His manger,  
Where the hornèd oxen fed;  
Peace, my darling; here's no danger,  
Here's no ox anear thy bed.

'T was to save thee, child, from dying,  
Save my dear from burning flame,  
Bitter groans and endless crying,  
That thy blest Redeemer came.

May'st thou live to know and fear Him,  
Trust and love Him all thy days;  
Then go dwell forever near Him,  
See His face, and sing His praise.

*Isaac Watts*

## *Lullabies*

### CRADLE SONG

ERE the moon begins to rise  
Or a star to shine,  
All the blue bells close their eyes —  
So close thine,  
Thine, dear, thine !

Birds are sleeping in the nest  
On the swaying bough,  
Thus, against the mother-breast —  
So sleep thou,  
Sleep, sleep, thou !

*Thomas Bailey Aldrich*

### SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP

SLEEP, baby, sleep !  
Thy father watches the sheep ;  
Thy mother is shaking the dream-land tree,  
And down falls a little dream on thee :  
Sleep, baby, sleep !

Sleep, baby, sleep !  
The large stars are the sheep,  
The little stars are the lambs I guess,  
The fair moon is the shepherdess :  
Sleep, baby, sleep !

*Anonymous*



## *To Mother*

### JAPANESE LULLABY

SLEEP, little pigeon, and fold your wings, —  
Little blue pigeon with velvet eyes;  
Sleep to the singing of mother-bird swing-  
ing —  
Swinging the nest where her little one lies.

Away out yonder I see a star, —  
Silvery star with a tinkling song;  
To the soft dew falling I hear it calling —  
Calling and tinkling the night along.

In through the window a moonbeam  
comes, —  
Little gold moonbeam with misty wings;  
All silently creeping, it asks: "Is he sleep-  
ing —  
Sleeping and dreaming while mother  
sings?"

Up from the sea there floats the sob  
Of the waves that are breaking upon the  
shore,  
As though they were groaning in anguish,  
and moaning —  
Bemoaning the ship that shall come no  
more.

## *Lullabies*

But sleep, little pigeon, and fold your  
wings, —

Little blue pigeon with mournful eyes;  
Am I not singing? — see, I am swing-  
ing —

Swinging the nest where my darling  
lies.

*Eugene Field*

### THE COTTAGER'S LULLABY

THE days are cold, the nights are long ;  
The north-wind sings a doleful song ;  
Then hush again upon my breast,  
All merry things are now at rest,  
Save thee, my pretty love!

The kitten sleeps upon the hearth,  
The crickets long have ceased their mirth ;  
There 's nothing stirring in the house  
Save one wee, hungry, nibbling mouse ;  
Then why so busy thou ?

Nay, start not at that sparkling light ;  
'T is but the moon that shines so bright  
On the window-pane bedropped with rain ;  
Then, little darling! sleep again,  
And wake when it is day.

*Dorothy Wordsworth*

## *To Mother*

### SWEDISH MOTHER'S LULLABY

THERE sitteth a dove, so fair and white,  
All on a lily spray;  
And she listeneth how to the Saviour above  
The little children pray.

LIGHTLY she spreads her friendly wings,  
And to heaven's gate hath sped,  
And unto the Father in heaven she bears  
The prayers the children have said.

AND back she comes from heaven's gate,  
And brings — that dove so mild —  
From the Father in heaven, who hears her  
speak,  
A blessing for every child.

*Frederika Bremer*

### THE ROAD TO SLUMBER-LAND

WHAT is the road to slumber-land and when  
does the baby go?  
The road lies straight through mother's arms  
when the sun is sinking low.

HE goes by the drowsy land of nod to the  
music of lullaby,  
When all wee lambs are safe in the fold,  
under the evening sky.

## *Lullabies*

A soft little nightgown clean and white; a  
face washed sweet and fair;

A mother brushing the tangles out of the  
silken, golden hair.

Two little tired, satiny feet, from shoe and  
stocking free;

Two little palms together clasped at the  
mother's patient knee.

Some baby words that are drowsily lisped to  
the tender Shepherd's ear;

And a kiss that only a mother can place on  
the brow of her baby dear.

A little round head that nestles at last close  
to the mother's breast,

And then the lullaby soft and low, singing  
the song of rest.

And closer and closer the blue-veined lids  
are hiding the baby eyes,

As over the road to slumber-land the dear  
little traveler hies.

For this is the way, through mother's arms,  
all little babies go

To the beautiful city of slumber-land when  
the sun is sinking low.

*Mary Dow Brine*

## *To Mother*

### WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

WYNKEN, Blynken, and Nod one night  
Sailed off in a wooden shoe, —  
Sailed on a river of crystal light  
Into a sea of dew.

“Where are you going, and what do you wish?”

The old moon asked the three.

“We have come to fish for the herring fish  
That live in this beautiful sea;  
Nets of silver and gold have we!”

Said Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,  
As they rocked in the wooden shoe;  
And the wind that sped them all night  
long

Ruffled the waves of dew.

The little stars were the herring fish  
That lived in that beautiful sea —

“Now cast your nets wherever you wish, —  
Never afeard are we!”

So cried the stars to the fishermen three,  
Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.

## *Lullabies*

All night long their nets they threw  
To the stars in the twinkling foam, —  
Then down from the skies came the wooden  
shoe,  
Bringing the fishermen home :  
'Twas all so pretty a sail, it seemed  
As if it could not be ;  
And some folk thought 't was a dream they 'd  
dreamed  
Of sailing that beautiful sea ;  
But I shall name you the fishermen  
three :  
Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,  
And Nod is a little head  
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies  
Is a wee one's trundle-bed ;  
So shut your eyes while Mother sings  
Of wonderful sights that be,  
And you shall see the beautiful things  
As you rock in the misty sea  
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen  
three : —  
Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.

*Eugene Field*

## *To Mother*

### AULD DADDY DARKNESS

AULD Daddy Darkness creeps frae his hole,  
Black as a blackamoor, blin' as a mole :  
Stir the fire till it lowes, let the bairnie  
    sit,  
Auld Daddy Darkness is no want it yit.

See him in the corners hidin' frae the licht,  
See him at the window gloomin' at the  
    nicht;  
Turn up the gas licht, close the shutters a',  
An' Auld Daddy Darkness will flee far  
    awa'.

Awa' to hide the birdie within its cosy nest,  
Awa' to lap the wee floers on their mither's  
    breast,  
Awa' to loosen Gaffer Toil frae his daily ca',  
For Auld Daddy Darkness is kindly to a'.

He comes when we're weary to wean's frae  
    oor waes,  
He comes when the bairnies are getting off  
    their claes ;  
To cover them sae cosy, an' bring bonnie  
    dreams,  
So Auld Daddy Darkness is better than he  
    seems.

## *Lullabies*

Steek yer een, my wee tot, ye'll see Daddy  
    then ;  
He's in below the bed claes, to cuddle ye  
    he's fain ;  
Noo nestle to his bosie, sleep and dream yer  
    fill,  
Till Wee Davie Daylicht comes keekin' owre  
    the hill.

*James Ferguson*

## MOTHER-SONG

(From "Prince Lucifer")

WHITE little hands!  
    Pink little feet!  
Dimpled all over,  
    Sweet, sweet, sweet!  
What dost thou wail for?  
    The unknown? the unseen?  
The ills that are coming,  
    The joys that have been?

Cling to me closer,  
    Closer and closer,  
Till the pain that is purer  
    Hath banished the grosser.  
Drain, drain at the stream, love,  
    Thy hunger is freeing,  
That was born in a dream, love,  
    Along with thy being!



## *To Mother*

Little fingers that feel  
For their home on my breast,  
Little lips that appeal  
For their nurture, their rest!  
Why, why dost thou weep, dear?  
Nay, stifle thy cries,  
Till the dew of thy sleep, dear,  
Lies soft on thine eyes.

*Alfred Austin*

## SEPHESTIA'S LULLABY

(From "Menaphon")

WEEP not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;  
When thou art old there's grief enough for  
thee.

Mother's wag, pretty boy,  
Father's sorrow, father's joy;  
When thy father first did see  
Such a boy by him and me,  
He was glad, I was woe;  
Fortune changèd made him so,  
When he left his pretty boy,  
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;  
When thou art old there's grief enough for  
thee.

Streaming tears that never stint,  
Like pearl-drops from a flint,

## *Lullabies*

Fell by course from his eyes,  
That one another's place supplies ;  
Thus he grieved in every part,  
Tears of blood fell from his heart,  
When he left his pretty boy,  
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my  
knee ;

When thou art old there's grief enough for  
thee.

The wanton smiled, father wept,  
Mother cried, baby leapt ;  
More he crowed, more we cried,  
Nature could not sorrow hide :  
He must go, he must kiss  
Child and mother, baby bliss,  
For he left his pretty boy,  
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,  
When thou art old there's grief enough for  
thee.

*Robert Greene*

## CRADLE SONG

SLEEP, sleep, beauty bright,  
Dreaming in the joys of night ;  
Sleep, sleep ; in thy sleep  
Little sorrows sit and weep.

## *To Mother*

Sweet babe, in thy face  
Soft desires I can trace,  
Secret joys and secret smiles,  
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel  
Smiles as of the morning steal  
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast  
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep  
In thy little heart asleep!  
When thy little heart doth wake,  
Then the dreadful night shall break.

*William Blake*

## LULLABY OF AN INFANT CHIEF

O, HUSH thee, my babie, thy sire was a  
knight,  
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright;  
The woods and the glens, from the towers  
which we see,  
They are all belonging, dear babie, to thee.  
O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O, fear not the bugle, though loudly it  
blows,  
It calls but the warders that guard thy re-  
pose;

## *Lullabies*

Their bows would be bended, their blades  
would be red,

Ere the step of a foeman draws near to thy  
bed.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O, hush thee, my babie, the time soon will  
come,

When thy sleep shall be broken by trumpet  
and drum ;

Then hush thee, my darling, take rest while  
you may,

For strife comes with manhood, and waking  
with day.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

*Walter Scott*



# The JOY of MOTHERHOOD





## THE FIRSTBORN

So fair, so dear, so warm upon my bosom,  
And in my hands the little rosy feet.  
Sleep on, my little bird, my lamb, my blossom ;  
Sleep on, sleep on, my sweet.

What is it God hath given me to cherish,  
This living, moving wonder which is mine —  
Mine only ? Leave it with me or I perish,  
Dear Lord of love divine.

Dear Lord, 't is wonderful beyond all wonder,  
This tender miracle vouchsafed to me,  
One with myself, yet just as far asunder  
That I myself may see.

Flesh of my flesh, and yet so subtly linking  
New selfs with old, all things that I have been  
With present joys beyond my former thinking  
And future things unseen.



## *To Mother*

There life began, and here it links with  
    heaven,  
The golden chain of years scarce dipped  
    adown  
From birth, ere once again a hold is given  
    And nearer to God's Throne.

Seen, held in arms and clasped around so  
    tightly, —  
My love, my bird, I will not let thee go.  
Yet soon the little rosy feet must lightly  
    Go pattering to and fro.

Mine, Lord, all mine Thy gift and loving  
    token.  
Mine — yes or no, unseen its soul divine?  
Mine by the chain of love with links un-  
    broken,  
Dear Saviour, Thine and mine.

*John Arthur Goodchild*

## BABY-LAND

“How many miles to Baby-Land?”  
    “Any one can tell;  
        Up one flight,  
        To the right;  
    Please to ring the bell.”

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

“What can you see in Baby-Land?”

“Little folks in white —

Downy heads,

Cradle-beds,

Faces pure and bright!”

“What do they do in Baby-Land?”

“Dream and wake and play,

Laugh and crow,

Shout and grow;

Jolly times have they!”

“What do they say in Baby-Land?”

“Why, the oddest things;

Might as well

Try to tell

What a birdie sings!”

“Who is the Queen of Baby-Land?”

“Mother, kind and sweet;

And her love,

Born above,

Guides the little feet.”

*George Cooper*

## MOTHER'S SONG

MY heart is like a fountain true

That flows and flows with love to you.

As chirps the lark unto the tree

So chirps my pretty babe to me.

And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

## *To Mother*

There's not a rose where'er I seek,  
As comely as my baby's cheek.  
There's not a comb of honey-bee,  
So full of sweets as babe to me.  
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

There's not a star that shines on high,  
Is brighter than my baby's eye.  
There's not a boat upon the sea,  
Can dance as baby does to me.  
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

No silk was ever spun so fine  
As is the hair of baby mine.  
My baby smells more sweet to me  
Than smells in spring the elder tree.  
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

A little fish swims in the well,  
So in my heart does baby dwell.  
A little flower blows on the tree,  
My baby is the flower to me,  
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

The Queen has sceptre, crown and ball,  
You are my sceptre, crown and all.  
For all her robes of royal silk,  
More fair your skin, as white as milk.  
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

Ten thousand parks where deer do run,  
Ten thousand roses in the sun,  
Ten thousand pearls beneath the sea,  
My babe more precious is to me.  
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

*Unknown*

### CRADLE SONG

SLEEP, little baby of mine,  
Night and the darkness are near,  
But Jesus looks down  
Through the shadows that frown,  
And baby has nothing to fear.

Shut, little sleepy blue eyes;  
Dear little head, be at rest;  
Jesus, like you,  
Was a baby once, too,  
And slept on His own mother's  
breast.

Sleep, little baby of mine,  
Soft on your pillow so white;  
Jesus is here  
To watch over you, dear,  
And nothing can harm you to-  
night.

## *To Mother*

O, little darling of mine,  
What can you know of the bliss,  
The comfort I keep,  
Awake and asleep,  
Because I am certain of this?

*Unknown*

## CRADLE SONG

(From "Bitter-Sweet")

WHAT is the little one thinking about?  
Very wonderful things, no doubt!  
Unwritten history!  
Unfathomed mystery!  
Yet he laughs and cries, and eats and drinks,  
And chuckles and crows, and nods and  
winks,  
As if his head were as full of kinks  
And curious riddles as any sphinx!  
Warped by colic, and wet by tears,  
Punctured by pins, and tortured by fears,  
Our little nephew will lose two years;  
And he'll never know  
Where the summers go; —  
He need not laugh, for he'll find it so!

Who can tell what a baby thinks?  
Who can follow the gossamer links  
By which the mannikin feels his way

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

Out from the shore of the great unknown,  
Blind, and wailing, and alone,

Into the light of day? —

Out from the shore of the unknown sea,  
Tossing in pitiful agony; —

Of the unknown sea that reels and rolls,  
Specked with the barks of little souls, —  
Barks that were launched on the other side,  
And slipped from Heaven on an ebbing  
tide!

What does he think of his mother's eyes?  
What does he think of his mother's hair?

What of the cradle-roof that flies  
Forward and backward through the air?

What does he think of his mother's breast,  
Bare and beautiful, smooth and white,  
Seeking it ever with fresh delight, —

Cup of his life, and couch of his rest?  
What does he think when her quick embrace  
Presses his hand and buries his face  
Deep where the heart-throbs sink and swell  
With a tenderness she can never tell,  
Though she murmur the words  
Of all the birds, —

Words she has learned to murmur well?

Now he thinks he'll go to sleep!

I can see the shadow creep

Over his eyes, in soft eclipse,

Over his brow, and over his lips,

Out to his little finger-tips!

## *To Mother*

Softly sinking, down he goes !  
Down he goes ! down he goes !  
See ! he is hushed in sweet repose !

*Josiah Gilbert Holland*

## A SONG OF TWILIGHT

OH, to come home once more, when the dusk  
is falling,  
To see the nursery lighted and the chil-  
dren's table spread ;  
" Mother, mother, mother ! " the eager voices  
calling,  
" The baby was so sleepy that he had to go  
to bed ! "

Oh, to come home once more, and see the  
smiling faces,  
Dark head, bright head, clustered at the  
pane ;  
Much the years have taken, when the heart  
its path retraces,  
But until time is not for me, the image  
will remain.

Men and women now they are, standing  
straight and steady,  
Grave heart, gay heart, fit for life's em-  
prise ;

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

Shoulder set to shoulder, how should they be  
but ready !

The future shines before them with the  
light of their own eyes.

Still each answers to my call ; no good has  
been denied me,

My burdens have been fitted to the little  
strength that 's mine,

Beauty, pride and peace have walked by day  
beside me,

The evening closes gently in, and how  
can I repine ?

But oh, to see once more, when the early dusk  
is falling ;

The nursery windows glowing and the  
children's table spread ;

“Mother, mother, mother !” the high child-  
voices calling,

“He could n't stay awake for you, he had  
to go to bed !”

*Unknown*

## TUCKING THE BABY IN

THE dark-fringed eyelids slowly close

On eyes serene and deep ;

Upon my breast my own sweet child

Has gently dropped to sleep ;



## *To Mother*

I kiss his soft and dimpled cheek,  
I kiss his rounded chin,  
Then lay him on his little bed,  
And tuck my baby in.

How fair and innocent he lies ;  
Like some small angel strayed,  
His face still warmed by God's own smile,  
That slumbers unafraid ;  
Or like some new embodied soul,  
Still pure from taint of sin —  
My thoughts are reverent as I stoop  
To tuck my baby in.

What toil must stain these tiny hands  
That now lie still and white ?  
What shadows creep across the face  
That shines with morning light ?  
These wee pink shoeless feet — how far  
Shall go their lengthening tread,  
When they no longer cuddled close  
May rest upon this bed ?

O what am I that I should train  
An angel for the skies ;  
Or mix the potent draught that feeds  
The soul within these eyes ?  
I reach him up to the sinless Hands  
Before his cares begin, —  
Great Father, with Thy folds of love,  
O tuck my baby in.

*Curtis May*

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

### MOTHER AND CHILD

THE wind blew wide the casement, and  
within —

It was the loveliest picture ! — a sweet child  
Lay in its mother's arms, and drew its life,  
In pauses, from the fountain, — the white  
round

Part shaded by loose tresses, soft and dark,  
Concealing, but still showing, the fair realm  
Of so much rapture, as green shadowing  
trees

With beauty shroud the brooklet. The red  
lips

Were parted, and the cheek upon the breast  
Lay close, and, like the young leaf of the  
flower,

Wore the same color, rich and warm and  
fresh : —

And such alone are beautiful. Its eye,  
A full blue gem, most exquisitely set,  
Looked archly on its world, — the little  
imp,

As if it knew even then that such a wreath  
Were not for all ; and with its playful hands  
It drew aside the robe that hid its realm,  
And peeped and laughed aloud, and so it  
laid

Its head on the shrine of such pure joys,

## *To Mother*

And, laughing, slept. And while it slept, the  
tears

Of the sweet mother fell upon its cheek, —  
Tears such as fall from April skies, and  
bring

The sunlight after. They were tears of joy;  
And the true heart of that young mother  
then

Grew lighter, and she sang unconsciously  
The silliest ballad-song that ever yet  
Subdued the nursery's voices, and brought  
sleep

To fold her sabbath wings above its couch.

*William Gilmore Simms*

## MATERNITY

WITHIN the crib that stands beside my bed  
A little form in sweet abandon lies  
And as I bend above with misty eyes  
I know how Mary's heart was comforted.

O world of Mothers! blest are we who know  
The ecstasy — the deep God-given  
thrill  
That Mary felt when all the earth was  
still

In the Judean starlight long ago!

*Anne P. L. Field*

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

### THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

MY mother bore me in the southern wild,  
And I am black, but O, my soul is white!  
White as an angel is the English child,  
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,  
And, sitting down before the heat of day,  
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,  
And, pointing to the East, began to say:

“Look at the rising sun; there God does live,  
And gives His light, and gives His heat  
away,  
And flowers and trees and beasts and men  
receive  
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

“And we are put on earth a little space,  
That we may learn to bear the beams of  
love;  
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face  
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

“For when our souls have learn'd the heat  
to bear,  
The cloud will vanish, when we shall hear  
His voice,

## *To Mother*

Saying 'Come out from the grove, my love  
and care,  
And round my golden tent like lambs re-  
joice.' "

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me,  
And thus I say to little English boy.  
When I from black and he from white cloud  
free,  
And round the tent of God like lambs we  
joy.

I 'll shade him from the heat till he can bear  
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;  
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver  
hair,  
And be like him, and he will then love me.

*William Blake*

## MY BIRD

(Lines written at Burmah in joy for a first-born)

ERE last year's morn had left the sky,  
A birdling sought my Indian nest;  
And folded, oh, so lovingly,  
Her tiny wings upon my breast.

From morn till evening's purple tinge,  
In winsome helplessness she lies;  
Two rosy leaves with a silken fringe,  
Shut softly on her starry eyes.

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

There 's not in Ind a lovelier bird ;  
Broad earth owns not a happier nest ;  
O God, thou hast a fountain stirred,  
Whose waters never more shall rest.

This beautiful, mysterious thing,  
This seeming visitant from heaven,  
This bird with the immortal wing,  
To me, to me, thy hand has given.

The pulse first caught its tiny stroke,  
The blood its crimson hue, from mine ;—  
This life which I have dared invoke,  
Henceforth, is parallel with thine.

A silent awe is in my room,  
I tremble with delicious fear ;  
The future, with its light and gloom,  
Time and eternity are here.

Doubts, hopes, in eager tumult rise,  
Hear, O my God, one earnest prayer :  
Room for my bird in Paradise,  
And give her angel-plumage there.

*Emily C. Judson*

## CHILDREN

CHILDREN are what the mothers are.  
No fondest father's fondest care

## *To Mother*

Can fashion so the infant heart  
As those creative beams that dart,  
With all their hopes and fears, upon  
The cradle of a sleeping son.

His startled eyes with wonder see  
A father near him on his knee,  
Who wishes all the while to trace  
The mother in his future face;  
But 't is to her alone uprise  
His waking arms; to her those eyes  
Open with joy and not surprise.

*Walter Savage Landor*

## MY LITTLE DEAR

MY little dear, so fast asleep,  
Whose arms about me cling,  
What kisses shall she have to keep,  
While she is slumbering?

Upon her golden baby-hair,  
The golden dreams I'll kiss  
Which Life spread through my morning  
fair,  
And I have saved, for this.

Upon her baby eyes I'll press  
The kiss Love gave to me,  
When his great joy and loveliness  
Made all things fair to see.

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

And on her lips, with smiles astir,  
Ah me, what prayer of old  
May now be kissed to comfort her,  
Should Love or Life grow cold.

*Dollie Radford*

## THE IMMORTALITY OF LOVE

THEY sin who tell us love can die :  
With life all other passions fly,  
All others are but vanity ;  
In heaven ambition cannot dwell,  
Nor avarice in the vaults of hell ;  
Earthly these passions of the earth,  
They perish where they have their  
birth ;  
But love is indestructible ;  
Its holy flame for ever burneth,  
From heaven it came, to heaven return-  
eth.

Too oft on earth a troubled guest,  
At times deceived, at times op-  
press'd,  
It here is tried and purified,  
Then hath in heaven its perfect rest :  
It soweth here with toil and care,  
But the harvest-time of love is there.  
Oh ! when a mother meets on high  
The babe she lost in infancy,



## *To Mother*

Hath she not then, for pains and fears,  
The day of woe, the watchful night,  
For all her sorrow, all her tears,  
An over-payment of delight?

*Robert Southey*

## “THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE”

WHENE’ER there comes a little child,  
My darling comes with him;  
Whene’er I hear a birdie wild  
Who sings his merry whim,  
Mine sings with him:  
If a low strain of music sails  
Among melodious hills and dales,  
When a white lamb or kitten leaps,  
Or star, or vernal flower peeps,  
When rainbow dews are pulsing joy,  
Or sunny waves, or leaflets toy,  
Then he who sleeps  
Softly wakes within my heart;  
With a kiss from him I start;  
He lays his head upon my breast,  
Tho’ I may not see my guest,  
Dear bosom-guest!  
In all that’s pure and fair and good,  
I feel the spring-time of thy blood,  
Hear thy whisper’d accents flow  
To lighten woe,

## *The Joy of Motherhood*

Feel them blend,  
Although I fail to comprehend.  
And if one woundeth with harsh word,  
Or deed, a child, or beast, or bird,  
It seems to strike weak Innocence  
Through him, who hath for his defence  
Thunder of the All-loving Sire,  
And mine, to whom He gave the fire.

*Roden Noel*



# OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER POEMS





## MY MOTHER

WHO fed me from her gentle breast,  
And hushed me in her arms to rest,  
And on my cheek sweet kisses pressed?

My Mother.

When sleep forsook my open eye,  
Who was it sang sweet lullaby,  
And rocked me that I should not cry?

My Mother.

Who sat and watched my infant head,  
When sleeping on my cradle bed,  
And tears of sweet affection shed?

My Mother.

When pain and sickness made me cry,  
Who gazed upon my heavy eye,  
And wept for fear that I should die?

My Mother.

Who dressed my doll in clothes so gay,  
And taught me pretty how to play,  
And minded all I had to say?

My Mother.

## *To Mother*

Who ran to help me when I fell,  
And would some pretty story tell,  
Or kiss the place to make it well?  
My Mother.

Who taught my infant lips to pray,  
And love God's holy book and day,  
And walk in wisdom's Pleasant way?  
My Mother.

And can I ever cease to be,  
Affectionate and kind to thee,  
Who was so very kind to me?  
My Mother.

Ah! no, the thought I cannot bear,  
And if God please my life to spare,  
I hope I shall reward thy care,  
My Mother.

When thou art feeble, old, and gray,  
My healthy arms shall be thy stay,  
And I will soothe thy pains away,  
My Mother.

And when I see thee hang thy head,  
'Twill be my turn to watch thy bed,  
And tears of sweet affection shed,  
My Mother.

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

For God, who lives above the skies,  
Would look with vengeance in his eyes,  
If I should ever dare despise

My Mother.

*Jane Taylor*

### HALF-WAKING

I THOUGHT it was the little bed  
I slept in long ago ;  
A straight white curtain at the head,  
And two smooth knobs below.

I thought I saw the nursery fire,  
And in a chair well-known  
My mother sat, and did not tire  
With reading all alone.

If I should make the slightest sound  
To show that I 'm awake,  
She 'd rise, and lap the blankets round,  
My pillow softly shake ;

Kiss me and turn my face to see  
The shadows on the wall,  
And then sing "Rousseau's Dream" to  
me  
Till fast asleep I fall.



## *To Mother*

But this is not my little bed;  
That time is far away:  
With strangers now I live instead,  
From dreary day to day.

*William Allingham*

## TO A CHILD EMBRACING HIS MOTHER

LOVE thy mother, little one!  
Kiss and clasp her neck again —  
Hereafter she may have a son  
Will kiss and clasp her neck in vain.  
Love thy mother, little one!

Gaze upon her living eyes,  
And mirror back her love for thee, —  
Hereafter thou mayst shudder sighs  
To meet them when they cannot see.  
Gaze upon her living eyes!

Press her lips the while they glow  
With love that they have often told, —  
Hereafter thou mayst press in woe,  
And kiss them till thine own are cold.  
Press her lips the while they glow!

Oh, revere her raven hair!  
Although it be not silver-gray —

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

Too early Death, led on by Care,  
May snatch save one dear lock away.  
Oh, revere her raven hair!

Pray for her at eve and morn,  
That Heaven may long the stroke defer;—  
For thou mayst live the hour forlorn  
When thou wilt ask to die with her.  
Pray for her at eve and morn!

*Thomas Hood*

## WISHING

RING-TING! I wish I were a Primrose,  
A bright yellow Primrose blowing in the  
spring!

The stooping boughs above me,  
The wandering bee to love me,  
The fern and moss to creep across,  
And the Elm-tree for our king!

Nay—stay! I wish I were an Elm-tree,  
A great lofty Elm-tree, with green leaves  
gay!

The winds would set them dancing,  
The sun and moonshine glance in,  
The birds would house among the boughs,  
And sweetly sing!

## *To Mother*

Oh — no! I wish I were a Robin.  
A Robin or a little Wren, everywhere to go;  
Through forest, field or garden,  
And ask no leave or pardon,  
Till winter comes with icy thumbs  
To ruffle up our wing!

Well — tell! Where should I fly to,  
Where go to sleep in the dark wood or dell?  
Before a day was over,  
Home comes the rover,  
For mother's kiss, — sweeter this  
Than any other thing!

*William Allingham*

## THE VISIT

“Do you go to Norton, mamma, this next  
week?

I wish you had leisure to listen to me,  
For when you are writing I don't like to  
speak,  
And that letter will never be finished, I  
see.”

“I will lay down my pen, then, my dear little  
child,  
For I see you have minded the lesson we  
read;

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

Come, jump on my knee here," mamma said  
and smiled,

As she kissed the soft hair on her Emily's  
head.

"Yes, to Norton we are going, and what  
shall I say

To your two little playmates there, Har-  
riet and Ann?

Shall I say you can read now as well as can  
play,

And can pull out your needle as fast as  
they can?"

"No, mamma, that was not what I wished  
you to hear!

And I fear you won't like what I'm going  
to say;

Stop, put down your head, let me speak in  
your ear,

For to whisper, I think, is by much the  
best way."

She asked to be taken her young friends to  
see,

And to show them her work-box, her dolls,  
and her toys;

She said she would try such a good child to be,

And be well-bred and kind to the two  
little boys.

## *To Mother*

She said if they teased her, or for her dolls  
cried,

She would not forget she was older than  
they,

If as boys they were rude, she would try  
not to chide,

But would put up the dolls until they  
went away.

From Ann she could learn how her bracelets  
to string,

And with Harriet would practice doll's  
bonnets to make;

She would give to the latter her favorite  
ring,

And for dear little Ann, that Dutch doll  
she would take.

"Then pray, dear mamma, pray do not say  
no ;

You are always so kind, do indulge me in  
this:

I think if you like it, papa'll let me go,

And I shall be so good, I'll do nothing  
amiss."

Papa was consulted, and though it was  
far,

Little Emily's goodness and worth gained  
the day,

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

She was promised to go when the next week  
came round,  
And see — there is the carriage now driv-  
ing away.

*Rhymes for the Nursery*

### THE BABY

WHAT is the pretty little thing  
That nurse so carefully doth bring,  
And round its head her apron fling?  
A baby.

Oh, dear, how very soft its cheek:  
Why, nurse, I cannot make it speak,  
And it can't walk, it is so weak,  
Poor baby.

Here take a bite, you little dear,  
I've got some cake and sweetmeats here,  
'T is very nice, you need not fear,  
You baby.

Oh, I'm afraid that it will die,  
Why can't it eat as well as I,  
And jump, and talk? do let it try,  
Poor baby.

Why, you were once a baby too,  
And could not jump, as now you do,  
But good mamma took care of you,  
Like baby.

## *To Mother*

And then she taught your pretty feet  
To pat along the carpet neat,  
And called papa to come and meet  
His baby.

Oh, good mamma, to take such care,  
And no kind pains and trouble spare,  
To feed and nurse you when you were  
A baby.

*Jane and Ann Taylor*

## GETTING UP

BABY, baby, ope your eye,  
For the sun is in the sky,  
And he 's peeping once again  
Through the frosty window pane;  
Little baby, do not keep  
Any longer fast asleep.

There, now, sit in mother's lap,  
That she may untie your cap,  
For the little strings have got  
Twisted into such a knot;  
Ah! for shame, — you 've been at play  
With the bobbin, as you lay.

There it comes, — now let me see  
Where your petticoats can be ;

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

Oh, — they 're in the window seat,  
Folded very smooth and neat :  
When my baby older grows  
She shall double up her clothes.

Now one pretty little kiss,  
For dressing you as neat as this,  
And before we go downstairs,  
Don't forget to say your pray'rs,  
For 't is God who loves to keep  
Little babies in their sleep.

*Jane Taylor*

### MAMMA!

(From "The Floweret")

MY own mamma!  
My dear mamma!  
How happy I shall be,  
To-morrow night,  
At candle-light,  
When she comes home to me.

To-morrow night,  
At candle-light, —  
Yes, that 's the time, they say,  
That she 'll be here,  
Our mother dear, —  
How long she 's been away.



## *To Mother*

'T is just a week,  
Since on my cheek  
She pressed the parting kiss ;  
It seems like two, —  
I never knew  
So long a week as this.

My tangled hair  
She smoothed with care,  
With water bathed my brow ;  
And all with such  
A gentle touch, —  
There 's none to do so now.

I cannot play  
When she 's away ;  
There 's none to laugh with me ;  
And much I miss  
The tender kiss, —  
The seat upon her knee.

When up to bed  
I 'm sorrowing led,  
I linger on the stairs ;  
I lie and weep —  
I cannot sleep —  
I scarce can say my prayers.

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

But she will come,  
She 'll be at home  
To-morrow night, and then  
I hope that she  
Will never be  
So long away again.

*Anna M. Wells*

### TO MY MOTHER

THEY tell us of an Indian tree  
Which howsoe'er the sun and sky  
May tempt its boughs to wander free,  
And shoot and blossom, wide and high,  
Far better loves to bend its arms  
Downward again to that dear earth  
From which the life, that fills and warms  
Its grateful being, first had birth.  
'T is thus, though wooed by flattering friends,  
And fed with fame (if fame it be),  
This heart, my own dear mother, bends,  
With love's true instinct, back to thee!

*Thomas Moore*

### CUDDLE DOON

THE bairnies cuddle doon at nicht  
Wi' muckle faught an' din ;  
" Oh try and sleep, ye waukrife rogues,  
Your faither 's comin' in."

## *To Mother*

They never heed a word I speak ;  
I try to gie a froon,  
But aye I hap them up an' cry,  
" Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

Wee Jamie wi' the curly heid —  
He aye sleeps next the wa' —  
Bangs up an' cries, " I want a piece ;"  
The rascal starts them a'.  
I rin and fetch them pieces, drinks,  
They stop awee the soun',  
Then draw the blankets up an' cry,  
" Noo, weanies, cuddle doon."

But, ere five minutes gang, wee Rab  
Cries out, frae 'neath the claes,  
" Mither, mak' Tam gie ower at ance,  
He's kittlin' wi' his taes."  
The mischief 's in that Tam for tricks,  
He'd bother half the toon ;  
But aye I hap them up and cry,  
" Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

At length they hear their father's fit,  
An', as he steeks the door,  
They turn their faces to the wa',  
While Tam pretends to snore.  
" Hae a' the weans been gude ? " he asks,  
As he pits aff his shoon ;  
" The bairnies, John, are in their beds,  
An' lang since cuddled doon."

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

An' just afore we bed oorsels,  
We look at our wee lambs;  
Tam has his airm roun' wee Rab's  
neck,  
And Rab his airm round Tam's.  
I lift wee Jamie up the bed,  
An' as I straik each croon,  
I whisper, till my heart fills up,  
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

The bairnies cuddle doon at night  
Wi' mirth that 's dear to me;  
But soon the big warl's cark an' care  
Will quaten doon their glee.  
Yet, come what will to ilka ane,  
May He who rules aboon  
Aye whisper, though their pows be  
bald,  
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

*Alexander Anderson*

### THE BABY

SAFE sleeping on its mother's breast  
The smiling babe appears,  
Now sweetly sinking into rest;  
Now washed in sudden tears:  
Hush, hush, my little baby dear,  
There 's nobody to hurt you here.

## *To Mother*

Without a mother's tender care,  
The little thing must die,  
Its chubby hands too feeble are  
One service to supply ;  
And not a tittle does it know  
What kind of world 't is come into.

The lambs sport gayly on the grass  
When scarcely born a day ;  
The foal, beside its mother ass,  
Trots frolicksome away,  
No other creature, tame or wild,  
Is half so helpless as a child.

To nurse the Dolly, gayly drest,  
And stroke its flaxen hair,  
Or ring the coral at its waist,  
With silver bells so fair,  
Is all the little creature can,  
That is so soon to be a man.

Full many a summer's sun must glow  
And lighten up the skies,  
Before its tender limbs can grow  
To anything of size ;  
And all the while the mother's eye  
Must every little want supply.

Then surely, when each little limb  
Shall grow to healthy size,

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

And youth and manhood strengthen him  
For toil and enterprise,  
His mother's kindness is a debt,  
He never, never will forget.

*Jane Taylor*

### GOOD-NIGHT

LITTLE baby, lay your head  
On your pretty cradle-bed ;  
Shut your eye-peeps now the day  
And the light are gone away ;  
All the clothes are tucked in tight ;  
Little baby dear, good-night.

Yes, my darling, well I know  
How the bitter wind doth blow ;  
And the winter's snow and rain  
Patter on the window-pane :  
But they cannot come in here,  
To my little baby dear ;

For the window shutteth fast,  
Till the stormy night is past ;  
And the curtains warm are spread  
Round about her cradle bed :  
So till morning shineth bright  
Little baby dear, good-night.

*Jane Taylor*

## *To Mother*

### THE OLD ARM-CHAIR

I LOVE it! I love it! and who shall dare  
To chide me for loving that old arm-chair?  
I've treasured it long as a sainted prize,  
I've bedew'd it with tears, and embalm'd it  
with sighs;  
'T is bound by a thousand bands to my heart;  
Not a tie will break, not a link will start.  
Would ye learn the spell?—a mother sat  
there,  
And a sacred thing is that old arm-chair.

In childhood's hour I linger'd near  
The hallow'd seat with listening ear;  
And gentle words that mother would give,  
To fit me to die and teach me to live:  
She told me shame would never betide  
With truth for my creed and God for my  
guide;  
She taught me to lisp my earliest prayer,  
As I knelt beside that old arm-chair.

I sat and watch'd her many a day,  
When her eye grew dim, and her locks were  
gray;  
And I almost worshipp'd her when she  
smiled,  
And turn'd from her Bible to bless her child.

## *Old-Fashioned Mother Poems*

Years roll'd on, but the last one sped —  
My idol was shatter'd, my earth-star fled;  
I learnt how much the heart can bear,  
When I saw her die in that old arm-chair.

'T is past! 't is past! but I gaze on it now  
With quivering breath and throbbing brow:  
'T was there she nursed me, 't was there she  
died;

And memory flows with lava tide.  
Say it is folly, and deem me weak,  
While the scalding drops start down my  
cheek;

But I love, I love it! and cannot tear  
My soul from a mother's old arm-chair.

*Eliza Cook*





# SONNETS *on* MOTHERHOOD





## AD MATREM

OFt in the after days, when thou and I  
Have fallen from the cope of human view,  
When, both together, under the sweet sky  
We sleep beneath the daisies and the dew,  
Men will recall thy gracious presence bland,  
Conning the pictured sweetness of thy face;  
Will pore o'er paintings by thy plastic hand,  
And vaunt thy skill, and tell thy deeds of  
                  grace.

Oh may they then, who crown thee with true  
                  bays,  
Saying, "What love unto her son she bore!"  
Make this addition to thy perfect praise,  
"Nor ever yet was mother worshiped  
                  more!"

So shall I live with thee, and thy dear fame  
Shall link my love unto thine honored name.

*Julian Henry Fane*

## NATURE

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,  
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,  
Half willing, half reluctant to be led,  
And leave his broken playthings on the  
                  floor,

## *To Mother*

Still gazing at them through the open door,  
Nor wholly reassured and comforted  
By promises of others in their stead,  
Which, though more splendid, may not  
please him more ;

So Nature deals with us, and takes away  
Our playthings one by one, and by the  
hand

Leads us to rest so gently, that we go  
Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,  
Being too full of sleep to understand  
How far the unknown transcends the what  
we know.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

## BEDTIME

'TIS bedtime ; say your hymn, and bid  
“ Good-night ;  
God bless Mamma, Papa, and dear ones  
all.”

Your half-shut eyes beneath your eyelids  
fall,

Another minute, you will shut them quite.  
Yes, I will carry you, put out the light,  
And tuck you up, although you are so  
tall !

What will you give me, sleepy one, and call  
My wages, if I settle you all right ?  
I laid her golden curls upon my arm,

## *Sonnets on Motherhood*

I drew her little feet within my hand,  
Her rosy palms were joined in trustful bliss,  
Her heart next mine beat gently, soft and  
warm

She nestled to me, by Love's command,  
Paid me my precious wages — "Baby's  
Kiss."

*Francis, Earl of Rosslyn*

## HER FIRSTBORN

It was her first sweet child, her heart's delight:

And, though we all foresaw his early doom,  
We kept the fearful secret out of sight;  
We saw the canker, but she kiss'd the bloom.  
And yet it might not be: we could not  
brook

To vex her happy heart with vague alarms,  
To blanch with fear her fond intrepid look,  
Or send a thrill through those encircling  
arms.

She smil'd upon him, waking or at rest:  
She could not dream her little child would  
die:

She toss'd him fondly with an upward eye:  
She seem'd as buoyant as a summer spray,  
That dances with a blossom on its breast,  
Nor knows how soon it will be borne away.

*Charles Tennyson Turner*

## *To Mother*

### TO A YOUNG CHILD

As doth his heart who travels far from home  
Leap up whenever he by chance doth see  
One from his mother-country lately come,  
Friend from my home — thus do I welcome  
thee.

Thou art so late arrived that I the tale  
Of thy high lineage on thy brow can trace,  
And almost feel the breath of that soft gale  
That wafted thee unto this desert place,  
And half can hear those ravishing sounds  
that flowed

From out Heaven's gate when it was oped  
for thee,

That thou awhile mightst leave thy bright  
abode

Amid these lone and desolate tracks to be  
A homesick, weary wanderer, and then  
Return unto thy native land again.

*Eliza Scudder*

### THE VIRGIN

MOTHER! whose virgin bosom was uncrost  
With the least shade of thought to sin allied;  
Woman! above all women glorified,  
Our tainted nature's solitary boast;  
Purer than foam on central ocean tost;

## *Sonnets on Motherhood*

Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak  
strewn

With fancied roses, than the unblemished  
moon

Before her wane begins on heaven's blue  
coast ;

Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,  
Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might  
bend,

As to a visible Power, in which did blend  
All that was mixed and reconciled in Thee  
Of mother's love with maiden purity,  
Of high with low, celestial with terrene!

*William Wordsworth*

## THANKSGIVING AFTER CHILDBIRTH

WOMAN! the Power who left his throne on  
high,

And deigned to wear the robe of flesh we  
wear,

The Power that thro' the straits of Infancy  
Did pass dependent on maternal care,  
His own humanity with Thee will share,  
Pleased with the thanks that in his People's  
eye

Thou offerest up for safe Delivery  
From Childbirth's perilous throes. And  
should the Heir



## *To Mother*

Of thy fond hopes hereafter walk inclined  
To courses fit to make a mother rue  
That ever he was born, a glance of mind  
Cast upon this observance may renew  
A better will; and, in the imagined view  
Of thee thus kneeling, safety he may find.

*William Wordsworth*

## MY MOTHER

THERE was a gather'd stillness in the room:  
Only the breathing of the great sea rose  
From far off, aiding that profound repose,  
With regular pulse and pause within the  
                  gloom  
Of twilight, as if some impending doom  
Was now approaching;—I sat moveless there,  
Watching with tears and thoughts that were  
                  like prayer,  
Till the hour struck,—the thread dropp'd  
                  from the loom;  
And the Bark pass'd in which freed souls  
                  are borne.  
The dear still'd face lay there; that sound  
                  forlorn  
Continued; I rose not, but long sat by:  
And now my heart oft hears that sad seashore,  
When she is in the far-off land, and I  
Wait the dark sail returning yet once more.

*William Bell Scott*

## *Sonnets of Motherhood*

### EVENING

AGE cannot wither her whom not gray hairs  
Nor furrowed cheeks have made the thrall  
of Time ;

For Spring lies hidden under Winter's rime,  
And violets know the victory is theirs.

Even so the corn of Egypt, unawares,  
Proud Nilus shelters with engulfing slime ;

So Etna's hardening crust a more sublime  
Volley of pent-up fires at last prepares.

O face yet fair, if paler, and serene  
With sense of duty done without complaint!

O venerable crown! — a living green,  
Strength to the weak, and courage to the  
faint —

Thy bleaching locks, thy wrinkles, have but  
been

Fresh beads upon the rosary of a saint!

*Wendell Phillips Garrison*

### TO MY FIRST LOVE, MY MOTHER

SONNETS are full of love, and this my tome

Has many sonnets: so here now shall be

One sonnet more, a love sonnet, from me

To her whose heart is my heart's quiet home,

To my first Love, my Mother, on whose  
knee

## *To Mother*

I learnt love-lore that is not troublesome;  
Whose service is my special dignity,  
And she my lodestar while I go and come.

And so because you love me, and because  
I love you, Mother, I have woven a  
wreath  
Of rhymes wherewith to crown your  
honored name:  
In you not fourscore years can dim the  
flame  
Of love, whose blessed glow transcends the  
laws  
Of time and change and mortal life and  
death.

*Christina G. Rossetti*

TRIBUTES  
*to*  
MOTHERS





## MOTHER O' MINE<sup>1</sup>

If I were hanged on the highest hill,  
    *Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
I know whose love would follow me still,  
    *Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
  
If I were drowned in the deepest sea,  
    *Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
I know whose tears would come down to me,  
    *Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
  
If I were damned of body and soul,  
I know whose prayers would make me whole,  
    *Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
                                *Rudyard Kipling*

## AT BETHLEHEM

LONG, long before the Babe could speak,  
When he would kiss his mother's cheek  
    And to her bosom press,  
The brightest angels standing near  
Would turn away to hide a tear —  
    For they are motherless.

<sup>1</sup> By permission of the author, Rudyard Kipling.  
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## *To Mother*

Where were ye, Birds, that bless His name,  
When wingless to the world He came,  
And wordless, though Himself the Word  
That made the blossom and the bird?

*John Banister Tabb*

## TO HIS MOTHER

HE brought a Lily white,  
That bowed its fragrant head  
And blushed a rosy red  
Before her fairer light.

He brought a rose ; and, lo,  
The crimson blossom saw  
Her beauty, and in awe  
Became as white as snow.

*John Banister Tabb*

## THE SHEPHERDESS

SHE walks — the lady of my delight —  
A shepherdess of sheep.  
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them  
white ;  
She guards them from the steep.  
She feeds them on the fragrant height,  
And folds them in for sleep.

## *Tributes to Mothers*

She roams maternal hills and bright,  
Dark valleys safe and deep.  
Into that tender breast at night  
The chastest stars may peep.  
She walks — the lady of my delight —  
A shepherdess of sheep.

She holds her little thoughts in sight,  
Though gay they run and leap.  
She is so circumspect and right ;  
She has her soul to keep.  
She walks — the lady of my delight —  
A shepherdess of sheep.

*Alice Meynell*

## MOTHERLESS

I WRITE. My mother was a Florentine,  
Whose rare blue eyes were shut from seeing  
me

When scarcely I was four years old ; my life,  
A poor spark snatched up from a failing lamp  
Which went out therefore. She was weak  
and frail ;

She could not bear the joy of giving life—  
The mother's rapture slew her. If her kiss  
Had left a longer weight upon my lips,  
It might have steadied the uneasy breath,  
And reconciled and fraternized my soul  
With a new order. As it was, indeed,



## *To Mother*

I felt a mother-want about the world,  
And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb  
Left out at night, in shutting up the fold, —  
As restless as a nest-deserted bird  
Grown chill through something being away,  
                  though what

It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was born  
To make my father sadder, and myself  
Not overjoyous, truly. Women know  
The way to rear up children (to be just)  
They know a simple, merry, tender knack  
Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,  
And stringing pretty words that make no  
                  sense,

And kissing full sense into empty words;  
Which things are corals to cut life upon,  
Although such trifles: children learn by such  
Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,  
And get not over-early solemnized, —  
But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's Divine,  
Which burns and hurts not, — not a single  
                  bloom, —

Become aware and unafraid of Love.  
Such good do mothers. Fathers love as well.  
— Mine did, I know, — but still with heavier  
                  brains,

And wills more consciously responsible,  
And not as wisely, since less foolishly;  
So mothers have God's license to be missed.

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

## *Tributes to Mothers*

### CHILD AND MOTHER

O MOTHER-MY-LOVE, if you 'll give me your  
hand,

And go where I ask you to wander,  
I will lead you away to a beautiful land —  
The Dreamland that's waiting out yon-  
der.

We 'll walk in a sweet-posie garden out there  
Where moonlight and starlight are stream-  
ing  
And the flowers and birds are filling the  
air  
With fragrance and music of dreaming.

There 'll be no little tired-out boy to undress,  
No questions or cares to perplex you ;  
There 'll be no little bruises or bumps to  
caress,

Nor patching of stockings to vex you.  
For I'll rock you away on a silver-dew  
stream,  
And sing you asleep when you're weary,  
And no one shall know of our beautiful  
dream

But you and your own little dearie.

And when I am tired I 'll nestle my head  
In the bosom that's soothed me so often,

## *To Mother*

And the wide-awake stars shall sing in my  
stead

A song which our dreaming shall soften.  
So Mother-my-Love, let me take your dear  
hand,

And away through the starlight we'll  
wander —

Away through the mist to the beautiful  
land —

The Dreamland that's waiting out yon-  
der!

*Eugene Field*

## MY AIN WIFE

I WADNA gi'e my ain wife  
For ony wife I see ;  
I wadna gi'e my ain wife  
For ony wife I see ;  
A bonnier yet I 've never seen,  
A better canna be —  
I wadna gi'e my ain wife  
For ony wife I see !

O couthie is my ingle-cheek,  
An' cheerie is my Jean ;  
I never see her angry look,  
Nor hear her word on ane.  
She 's gude wi' a' the neebours roun'  
An' aye gude wi' me —

## *Tributes to Mothers*

I wadna gi'e my ain wife  
For ony wife I see.

An' O her looks sae kindlie,  
They melt my heart outright,  
When o'er the baby at her breast  
She hangs wi' fond delight;  
She looks intill its bonnie face,  
An' syne looks to me —  
I wadna gi'e my ain wife  
For ony wife I see.

*Alexander Laing*

## SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

SHE was a phantom of delight  
When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
A lovely apparition, sent  
To be a moment's ornament;  
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;  
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;  
A dancing shape, an image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A spirit, yet a woman too!

## *To Mother*

Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin liberty ;  
A countenance in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet ;  
A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food,  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine ;  
A being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A traveler between life and death ;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;  
A perfect woman, nobly planned  
To warn, to comfort, and command ;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright  
With something of an angel light.

*William Wordsworth*

## CLING TO THY MOTHER

CLING to thy mother ; for she was the first  
To know thy being, and to feel thy life ;  
The hope of thee through many a pang she  
nurst ;  
And when, midst anguish like the parting  
strife,

## *Tributes to Mothers*

Her babe was in her arms, the agony  
Was all forgot, for bliss of loving thee.

Be gentle to thy mother ; long she bore  
Thine infant fretfulness and silly youth ;  
Nor rudely scorn the faithful voice that o'er  
Thy cradle pray'd, and taught thy lisp-  
ings truth.

Yes, she is old ; yet on thine adult brow  
She looks, and claims thee as her child e'en  
now.

Uphold thy mother ; close to her warm heart  
She carried, fed thee, lull'd thee to thy  
rest ;

Then taught thy tottering limbs their un-  
tried art,

Exulting in the fledging from her nest ;  
And now her steps are feeble, by her stay,  
Whose strength was thine in thy most feeble  
day.

Cherish thy mother ; brief perchance the  
time

May be that she will claim the care she  
gave ;

Past are her hopes of youth, her harvest  
prime

Of joy on earth ; her friends are in the  
grave ;

## *To Mother*

But for her children, she could lay her head  
Gladly to rest among her precious dead.

Be tender with thy mother ; words unkind,  
Or light neglect from thee, will give a  
pang  
To that fond bosom, where thou art en-  
shrined  
In love unutterable, more than fang  
Of venom'd serpent. Wound not that strong  
trust  
As thou wouldst hope for peace when she is  
dust.

O mother mine ! God grant I ne'er forget,  
Whatever be my grief, or what my joy,  
The unmeasured, inextinguishable debt  
I owe thy love ; but make my sweet em-  
ploy  
Ever through thy remaining days to be  
To thee as faithful, as thou wert to me.

*George Bethune*

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

“ Now I lay me down to sleep :  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,”  
Was my childhood's early prayer  
Taught by my mother's love and care.

## *Tributes to Mothers*

Many years since then have fled ;  
Mother slumbers with the dead ;  
Yet methinks I see her now,  
With love-lit eyes and holy brow,  
As, kneeling by her side to pray,  
She gently taught me how to say,  
“ Now I lay me down to sleep :  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

Oh ! could the faith of childhood's days  
Oh ! could its little hymns of praise,  
Oh ! could its simple, joyous trust  
Be recreated from the dust  
That lies around a wasted life,  
The fruit of many a bitter strife !  
Oh ! then at night in prayer I 'd bend,  
And call my God, my Father, Friend,  
And pray with childlike faith once more  
The prayer my mother taught of yore, —  
“ Now I lay me down to sleep :  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”  
*Eugene Henry Pullen*

## BIRTH

JUST when each bud was big with bloom,  
And as prophetic of perfume,  
When spring, with her bright horoscope,  
Was sweet as an unuttered hope ;



## *To Mother*

Just when the last star flickered out,  
And twilight, like a soul in doubt,  
Hovered between the dark and dawn,  
And day lay waiting to be born ;

Just when the gray and dewy air  
Grew sacred as an unvoiced prayer,  
And somewhere through the dusk she heard  
The stirring of a nested bird, —

Four angels glorified the place :  
Wan Pain unveiled her awful face ;  
Joy, soaring, sang ; Love, brooding, smiled ;  
Peace laid upon her breast a child.  
*Annie R. Stillman (" Grace Raymond ")*

## ONLY ONE

HUNDREDS of stars in the pretty sky ;  
Hundreds of shells on the shore together ;  
Hundreds of birds that go singing by ;  
Hundreds of bees in the sunny weather.

Hundreds of dewdrops to greet the dawn ;  
Hundreds of lambs in the purple clover ;  
Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn ;  
But only one mother the wide world over.  
*George Cooper*

## *Tributes to Mothers*

### “THE OLD FACE OF THE MOTHER OF MANY CHILDREN”

THE old face of the mother of many children,  
Whist ! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day  
morning,  
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the  
fences,  
It hangs thin by the sassafras and wild-  
cherry and cat-brier under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the  
soiree,  
I heard what the singers were singing so  
long,  
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from  
the white froth and the Water-blue.

Behold a woman !  
She looks out from her Quaker cap, her face  
is clearer and more beautiful than the  
sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded  
porch of the farmhouse,  
The sun just shines on her old white head.

## *To Mother*

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,  
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-  
daughters spun it with the distaff and  
the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,  
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot  
go and does not wish to go,  
The justified mother of men.

*Walt Whitman*

## A MOTHER

AH! bless'd are they for whom, 'mid all  
their pains,  
That faithful and unalter'd love remains ;  
Who, Life wreck'd round them — hunted  
from their rest —  
And, by all else forsaken or distress'd —  
Claim, in *one* heart, their sanctuary and  
shrine —  
As I, my Mother, claim'd my place in  
thine !  
Oft, since that hour, in sadness I retrace  
My childhood's vision of thy calm sweet  
face ;  
Oft see thy form, its mournful beauty  
shrouded  
In thy black weeds, and coif of widow's  
woe ;

## *Tributes to Mothers*

Thy dark expressive eyes all dim and clouded  
By that deep wretchedness the lonely  
know :

Stifling thy grief, to hear some weary task,  
Conn'd by unwilling lips, with listless air;  
Hoarding thy means, lest future need might  
ask

More than the widow's pittance then could  
spare.

Hidden, forgotten by the great and gay,  
Enduring sorrow, not by fits and starts,  
But the long self-denial, day by day,  
Alone amidst thy brood of careless hearts!  
Striving to guide, to teach, or to restrain,  
The young rebellious spirits crowding  
round,

Who saw not, knew not, felt not for thy  
pain,  
And could not comfort — yet had power  
to wound !

Ah ! how my selfish heart, which since hath  
grown

Familiar with deep trials of its own,  
With riper judgment looking to the past,  
Regrets the careless days that flew so fast,  
Stamps with remorse each wasted hour of  
time,

And darkens every folly into crime !

*Caroline E. S. Norton*

## *To Mother*

### TO MY MOTHER

I SEE your face as on that calmer day  
When from my infant eyes it passed away  
    Beyond these petty cares and questionings  
    Beyond this sphere of sordid human  
        things —  
The trampled field of time's capricious play.

Bright with more mother-love than tongue  
    can say,  
Stern with the sense of foes in strong array,  
    Yet hopeful, with no hopefulness earth  
        brings —  
I see your face.

O gracious guarder from the primrose way,  
O loving guide when wayward feet would  
    stray,  
O inspiration sweet when the heart sings,  
O patient ministrant to sufferings,  
Down the long road, *madonna mia*, may  
I see your face.

*Robert Haven Schauffler*

## *Tributes to Mothers*

### MY MOTHER

SHE was as good as goodness is,  
Her acts and all her words were kind,  
And high above all memories  
I hold the beauty of her mind.

*Frederic Hentz Adams*

THE END



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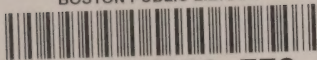








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